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## THE SHOUTING AND THE TUMULT DIES

### NEW YORK'S MANY SIDED PROBLEM

There has been a good deal of shouting and some tumult in New York City in recent months in connection with its many sided, interesting and often times perplexing housing problem.

The State Housing Board seems to have been the storm center of some of the tumult. It has been both attacked and attacker.

Almost a year ago a builder building a group of apartment houses in the Borough of the Bronx not viewing with equanimity the competition that his building would have to encounter from a new large-scale housing development—costing \$2,000,000, covering an entire block of 140,000 square feet and embracing some 8 separate six-story brick buildings—which had been sponsored by the State Housing Board and which like all of the projects under that body received the financial benefits of tax exemption, decided to go to law about it and see if he could not stop this competition, raising the issue that the State Housing Law was unconstitutional, attacking primarily its tax exemption feature as applied to the class of buildings whose competition he objected to.

Two separate actions were brought against the Board of Tax Commissioners, with the State Housing Board as an intervening defendant, on certiorari to review the findings of the State Board of Housing with regard to this rival project.

The first action was dismissed by the trial court (Special Term N. Y. Supreme Court—Justice Glennon. *Mount Hope Development Corporation v. James et al*) on the technical ground that the petitioner in the case before the court was not a party in interest.

Later a second suit was brought (*Mars Realty Corporation v. Sexton*, 141 Misc. 622), asking the Court to declare unconstitutional §39 of the State Housing Law and the ordinance of the City of New York



that provides for tax exemption for buildings built under the requirements and conditions of the State Housing Law.

The builders in this case had obtained a writ of certiorari on *ex parte* proceedings and an appeal was taken to the Appellate Division of the First Department. The appellate court in a decision handed down July 1st, 1931 (251 N. Y. Sup. 498; 141 Misc. 622) held that the petitioner was not a party in interest but a stranger to the proceeding, had never been a party to it and had neither intervened nor attempted to do so, and therefore had no right to review by certiorari.

This case was ultimately carried to the court of last resort, the Court of Appeals, which a few weeks ago handed down a brief decision to the effect that the State Board of Housing in approving the project of the Academy Housing Corporation for the construction of housing accommodations, in giving its approval to the sites selected as being adjacent to congested areas in which housing conditions should be corrected and improved, in approving the plans and specifications submitted as designed to provide accommodations which might be rented for the monthly rental charge of \$11 or less, and in otherwise giving to the project the sanctions required by the State Housing Law, acted in an administrative capacity rather than a judicial one; and, therefore, that a review of certiorari at the instance of the petitioner should not be had.

#### A STALEMATE

The total result, therefore, of this litigation is to leave matters where they stood, except that the Bronx builder who sought to prevent this competing development from being erected has failed in his effort.

It is to be regretted that the questions raised in this litigation could not have been squarely settled by the highest court; for the issue was a clear one, the petitioners alleging that the State Housing Law was unconstitutional, that the State Board of Housing was an unconstitutional body, and that there was no evidence to support a finding that the proposed improvements were within an area and adjacent to localities in which congested and insanitary housing conditions exist, as described in the State Housing Law.

Much was made in this litigation of the point that the purpose of the State Housing Law was, as stated in the act, to clear away slums and insanitary conditions and to put in their place new model housing schemes to be rented to the displaced slum dwellers, and that nothing of the kind had been done or was being done in most of the operations conducted under the sponsorship of the State Housing Board; that the buildings in question were miles removed from any slums and in a



district where by no stretch of imagination could there be said to be any slum dwellers and that, therefore, the buildings in question were not entitled to the benefits of the State Housing Law and particularly the benefit of tax exemption.

The State Housing Board, because of this stalemate, may very properly adopt the attitude of "*j'y suis, j'y reste*" and continue along the lines that it has been following so successfully since its inception.

The questions raised in this litigation are so interesting that we hope in some future case there will be a means of testing out these contentions in proceedings that will not be thrown out of court on legal technicalities; and that on the contrary the case will be carried to the court of last resort and a decision handed down that will establish beyond question the validity of the statute under which the State Housing Board operates.

### A LEGISLATIVE ATTACK

Shortly after this unsuccessful attack on the law in the courts, the State Housing Board out of a clear sky was confronted with an attack in the legislature by the complete cutting off of its appropriation. Without the sinews of war the State Housing Board would have found itself unable to proceed and would have had to go out of existence.

So far as we can discover, there does not seem to have been any motive of hostility behind this contemplated action of the legislature, but merely an effort to reduce governmental expenditures in a wide economy drive, the feeling apparently having been strong with the legislative leaders that the State Housing Board had performed its functions and that this was an expenditure that could safely be dispensed with.

This point of view was undoubtedly fostered by the unwillingness of the Commissioner of Public Works of whose department the State Housing Board was a subordinate bureau to support its work and back up its appropriations.

The members of the State Housing Board quickly rallied for the fray and brought to their support numerous organizations and individuals who viewed with real concern the proposal to put an end to the work done by this body.

As a result of the public discussion and agitation that followed, the legislature reconsidered its contemplated action and restored the \$46,000 item in the budget for the expenses of the Board.

At the same time, having found the Commissioner of Public Works hostile to the Board and its continuance as a bureau under his depart-



ment, the friends of the Board caused legislation to be introduced transferring it so as to be a bureau under the Secretary of State.

This legislation was later enacted and received the Governor's approval, who also approved the appropriation for the continuance of the Board's work.

#### THE BOARD TAKES THE OFFENSIVE

Almost immediately thereafter the Board having successfully repelled the attacks made upon it, assumed the offensive and led a movement to secure the disapproval by the Governor of legislation sponsored by the Walker Administration which sought to enable that Administration to proceed with the development of the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site on New York's lower East Side, where 7 blocks had been cleared of their existing tenements some years ago for the purpose of developing a model housing project upon the site—a project, however, which had languished owing to the inability of the city administration to find investors willing to invest their funds in a housing project on this site under the conditions that existed.

One of the reasons why these 7 blocks on New York's lower East Side have lain idle for nearly 3 years has been the inability of the city authorities to get responsible financial institutions to make loans upon property for which they had no security other than a lease. Naturally, conservative financial institutions were not willing to make loans under such circumstances.

Accordingly, the Walker Administration caused to be introduced at the session of the legislature which has recently concluded, a bill amending the New York City charter by providing, notwithstanding provisions to the contrary or limitations found in other parts of the charter or in other statutes with regard to the leasing of real property owned by the city, that where such property had been acquired in excess condemnation proceedings for the purposes of slum clearance and rehousing on the cleared site, that the City acting through the Sinking Fund Commissioners might mortgage the fee of such real property upon such terms and conditions as might be approved by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, with a further proviso that the Sinking Fund Commissioners were authorized to lease for housing purposes, including stores on the street level, such property upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Estimate and Apportionment might decide.

The State Housing Board construed this legislation as a direct challenge to their work and as raising an issue between the city author-

ities and the State. They flung themselves into the breach and urged upon the Governor at a public hearing that he should veto these proposals on the ground that they tended to break down the safeguards and protection which the State Housing Law afforded to housing schemes and established a dangerous and objectionable precedent, stating that if the city authorities wished to develop the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site, they had ample means of so doing by operating under the State Housing Law. The Chairman of the State Housing Board, Darwin R. James, in a hearing before the Governor speaking on this point said:

If this Bill become a law, the City Housing Board might just as well go out of business, because no one will come to the Housing Board when he can go to the City and operate under a plan void of safeguarding restrictions. There should not be two competing boards to supervise housing.

It is interesting and significant that the organized real estate interests of the city, while expressing opposition to the State Housing Board and the law which created it, because of its tax exemption provisions took the position before the Governor that they would rather trust that agency than the Board of Estimate to supervise such undertakings. Representatives of banks and of the East Side Chamber of Commerce took the position that it was unwise for the City to enter the real estate business in a competitive way, and that the proposals made by the Walker Administration were against public policy. A number of people interested in better housing in New York appeared on this occasion and added their voices in support of the position taken by the State Housing Board.

#### GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT TAKES A HAND

As a result of the arguments presented to him on this occasion Governor Roosevelt, a few days later, vetoed the New York City Administration measure. In his veto message the Governor pointed out that the City had failed to act under similar legislation enacted the year before which contained safeguards that were not present in the bill before him and that the measure was in conflict with the State's housing policy.

Among the safeguards and restrictions which the Governor called attention to that were in his opinion absent in this measure were the following:



1. The profit to be made by private capital was to be limited.
2. The property was to be devoted to low-rent housing.
3. Supervision of the project was to be under the State Housing Board, a body charged by the State with this function.
4. Safeguards would be prescribed insuring the feasibility of the project and guaranteeing that any profit in excess of the limited return would enure to the tenants of the buildings themselves.
5. A recapture provision would be inserted by the city so as to safeguard the operation of the project and secure any ultimate profit to the city itself rather than private capital.

Governor Roosevelt added, "The Bill before me dispenses with all of these safeguards. It is no answer to the foregoing objections to say that the Board of Estimate itself may provide the necessary safeguards. They are so important that they should be proposed as a matter of law for the entire State rather than be left to the discretion of the Board of the City." Adding, "In the course of the unusual and complicated negotiations which would arise under this bill with private capital, it would be very easy to lapse into the expedient rather than to insist upon principles. If the principles are embodied in a statute they cannot be disregarded."

We greatly fear that Governor Roosevelt was not well informed as to the nature of some of these "safeguards and restrictions" whose importance he stressed. One of those he mentioned is the "recapture" provision that was embodied in the State Housing Law last year.

Walter Kruesi, the manager of the Brooklyn Garden Apartments—whom no one can charge with not being an enthusiastic believer in this form of effort—pointed out in a recent issue of "Housing"\* how this recapture clause would operate against investment in this kind of enterprise.

Discussing this aspect of last year's legislation, he had the following to say:

The bill contains a ponderous recapture clause which in my judgment would militate against any use of the power intended to be conveyed by the bill as a whole.

The city may take back the sold land and any improvements upon it after 1 year within 20, and it may take back leased land after 1 year and anytime beyond within the lease period. It seems that it may even take over any other real property of the company to which it has sold or leased any of its land—assuming that in the course of a term of years up to 80 any of its agents in the next four generations of politicians had consented to the corporation's acquiring any other property. The city exercising this right would pay the net debts of the company, the "reasonable expenses of liquidation or dissolution" and return to the stockholders or debenture holders the par value of these securities plus interest at 6%—even though the debentures bore only 5½% interest—and any accrued interest or dividends on such stocks and bonds.

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\* *Housing*, December, 1931, pp. 304-307.



But in the event of foreclosure of a mortgage placed by such a company on its building and the city's land, these "valuable" recapture rights of the city terminate.

I cannot conceive that any of the sober and successful practitioners of improved housing for people of small means would undertake all of the hard work and risk to their own and their friends' capital with any such provision hanging over them. If I am right, this legislation will be futile—an illusion delaying economic attack upon an economic problem. If there are any bold enough to work under this clause, it is conceivable that city land leased by secret agreement, at no rent during "construction"—which may be stretched indefinitely—and nominal rent thereafter, with or without land taxes, might be so luxuriously or extravagantly or incompetently developed and managed that "recapture" would be instigated by the developers for their own rescue.

Frankly, we share Mr. Kruesi's view. We do not believe that any intelligent group of business men would invest their funds in the building of improved houses on land leased from the City with such a recapture clause as part of the agreement with the City.

The Governor also pointed out in his veto message that the Board of Estimate is not equipped with a sufficiently trained staff or qualified by experience to handle the complicated questions involved in low-rent housing and expressed the concluding opinion that the City could develop the site in question under the existing law through the State Housing Board.

#### A COUNTER MOVE BY WALKER

The next move in this controversy was sudden and dramatic. The ink was hardly dry on Governor Roosevelt's veto message, when Mayor Walker introduced in the Board of Estimate a bill the purpose of which was to clothe the city under its home rule powers with the same powers that had been included in the City's measure which the Governor had vetoed.

In a public statement issued by Mayor Walker at the time, the Mayor pointed out that plans had been prepared for the development of this site that were so attractive, in the opinion of the Mayor that, if they were made public, as he put it, he would fear a general exodus from Park Avenue to the lower East Side of Manhattan.

It can confidently be expected that the Mayor will push through the local legislative body the bill giving the city the powers which they sought to obtain from the state legislature and which the Governor placed his veto upon. Once equipped with these powers, the City—if it can find an operator—will undoubtedly make contracts and leases and proceed with the erection of buildings on the site in question.

The controversy, we fear, is likely to have serious repercussions—not limited to the simple question of the development of the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site.



We wonder whether the State Housing Board was well advised in taking the militant position that it did in opposition to the City Administration's bill. Individual members of that Board might very appropriately have taken such a position as citizens. But did not the Board as a board rather overstep its functions in taking the position that no improved housing project should be developed in any of the cities of the State unless it conformed to their requirements and came under their control.

The Board's position is a vulnerable one, as the recent attempt to abolish it should have indicated to its members. It would be a very simple matter for the Walker Administration to practically put the State Housing Board out of business by the simple device of repealing the Tax Exemption Ordinance. Without that feature, the Housing Board would find it impossible to function.

Similarly, the members of the State Housing Board, if so inclined, as citizens and tax payers could probably prevent the development of the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site and certainly the leasing of the land in that site for housing purposes—on the ground that such use of the property is not a "public use" or "for a public purpose" as those terms have been construed by the courts of this state—in fact of the whole country.

It is only a question of time before this issue of whether housing is a "public use" or not must be decided by the courts. In our opinion, the sooner it is cleared up, the sooner will progress be made in slum clearance and in improved housing. We hope that some public-spirited tax payer will take the lead and bring an action that will allow this question to be determined by the courts of last resort. Before any effective slum clearance work can be done this question must be settled.

## MUNICIPAL HOUSING IN PRACTICE

### NEW YORK'S FIASCO

"Next month we can celebrate the passing of 2½ years since the City of New York took title to the 7 blocks of land on Chrystie-Forsyth Street. The court awards exceeded \$15,000,000. A great amount of interest has been added since. The city continues to lose revenue from this unutilized land and Lower East Side business has been additionally depressed because of this stretch of emptiness which is carried on the tax books for 1932 for more than \$5,000,000."—East Side Chamber of Commerce, January, 1932.

If the earnest men and women who advocate municipal housing were not seduced by a theory, or had any sense of humor, they would find it difficult to keep a straight face when they urge the City of New York to embark upon vast municipal housing projects in the face of



this patently demonstrated example which the City has given of its inability to perform such functions satisfactorily.

The quotation at the beginning of this article is a bald statement of fact made by the East Side Chamber of Commerce. It should be sufficient to make any intelligent person stop, look and listen before advocating the entrusting to the municipal authorities of a city like New York the complicated and difficult functions involved in the building and management of vast housing enterprises.

If the city authorities had set out with the definite purpose in view of demonstrating to the citizens of New York the utter unfitness of city officials to engage in such enterprises they could not possibly have been more successful.

### EVERYTHING WRONG

From the very first initiation of the Chrystie-Forsyth Street project, there hasn't been a step taken by the city officials that was wise or sound. In the first place, the whole basis for the enterprise was of questionable legal validity. The property was taken under the apparent power given by the state constitution that where private property is taken for a public purpose an additional amount of such property may be taken under the so-called power of excess condemnation. Chrystie and Forsyth Streets were being widened in order to make them more suitable for present-day conditions of traffic. Had the City decided to take additional land at the time that the proceedings for the street widening were pending, such action would probably have been upon a legal basis—with two reservations which we shall discuss in a moment—but the action taken by the city authorities in acquiring the additional land for the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site was not so taken. It was not taken as an incident to a street widening proceeding. After the street widening proceeding had been adopted and was underway, as an after-thought, the City proceeded to pass further resolutions calling for the taking of the additional land. We believe the whole proceeding would be held invalid by the courts if this issue were squarely raised.

### POWER OF EXCESS CONDEMNATION IS A LIMITED ONE

In addition, the city authorities blithely and completely ignored the fact that the power of excess condemnation, as found in the constitution, can be exercised only within certain fixed limits. Under the provisions of §7 of Article 1 of the New York constitution the so-called



power of excess condemnation is very strictly limited. That section provides as follows:

The Legislature may authorize cities and counties to take more land and property than is needed for actual construction in the laying out, widening, extending or relocating parks, public places, highways or streets; provided, however, that *the additional land and property so authorized to be taken shall be no more than sufficient to form suitable building sites* abutting on such park, public place, highway or street. After so much of the land and property has been appropriated for such park, public place, highway or street as is needed therefor, the remainder may be sold or leased.

The property taken in the Chrystie-Forsyth Street scheme does not come within this requirement. An excess of 125 feet in depth, extending for 7 blocks, has been taken in addition to the land taken for the street widening. With the prevailing lot depth of property not only in this section of New York but through the entire city—which is a standardized unit of 100 feet—it would, indeed, be very difficult to convince the courts that property 125 feet in depth comes within the requirement of the constitution thus cited, as “no more than sufficient to form suitable building sites”, or that it comes within the purpose of this constitutional provision, viz., to enable the City to dispose in economical and satisfactory manner of the so-called “remnants” of property taken for street widening purposes.

It seems, therefore, that on two fundamental grounds there is grave doubt as to the validity of the City’s action at the very beginning of this project.

#### THE SITE UNSUITABLE

Considered from the practical side, the project was bungled from the start. Things were done in connection with it in camera and without taking the public into the Administration’s confidence. No attempt was made to consult housing experts or city planners with regard to the availability for the right kind of a housing development of the site proposed to be taken. Had such persons been consulted at the start, they would have unquestionably advised the city authorities that a site only 125 feet in depth did not lend itself to a modern type of development with Garden Apartments—that a site of that inadequate depth practically precluded that type of development.

Consultation with those familiar with the difficulties involved in such projects would also have made the city authorities understand that a successful project of this kind could not be expected unless first mortgage money could be obtained from responsible and conservative institutions upon a reasonable basis, and that such institutions, naturally, would not loan the large sums necessary for such purpose unless



they had security in the form of a first mortgage upon the real estate involved—that to ask great fiduciary institutions to make such loans merely upon a leasehold was chimerical.

All of these disadvantages could have been anticipated had the City gone about this business of housing in the same way that business men would have gone about it. City authorities, as a rule, do not perform their functions in that fashion—which is an excellent reason why there should not be municipal housing. From the very nature of things, city government is not so constituted as to make for success in this kind of enterprise.

### NO TAKERS AS YET

Although plans—numerous ones we understand—have been developed for this project and many negotiations have been had with public-spirited investors, up to the present time the Administration has not been able to “sell the idea” to such investors sufficiently to get them to agree to put their funds into the scheme. Numerous statements have been made as to the possibility of a development on this site on a commercial basis with an economic return on the money invested, but most of these schemes have counted very largely upon a tremendous revenue from retail stores occupying the entire ground floors of the site.

### THE STORE FALLACY

Commenting on this aspect of the question, Joseph Platzker, the intelligent and public-spirited Secretary of the East Side Chamber of Commerce—an organization that is more vitally concerned in this matter than perhaps any other organization in the city—after sketching the various proposals that had been put before the community with regard to the development of the site in question, had the following to say:

Very recently a member of that group proposed an “improvement” on the previous design by opening up the four sides of each street to retail stores. At least 300 were to be included and an annual store rental of at least \$400,000 anticipated. But the houses themselves, apparently, would accommodate less than 1,200 families \* \* \*

If 300 or more stores were created in this 7-block area, could they be rented at an average of \$100 per store per month and be run at a profit?

How many of the variety of shops found in our average shopping-residential neighborhoods would be afraid to enter a location reserved for tenants of the low income group?

If it were possible to establish new trade centers for retailers, jobbers and wholesalers in the jewelry, clothing, notions or women’s wear trades long entrenched in other business streets—would Lower



East Side gain anything by such a shift? Would leading merchants join in such a movement?

Should this area be encouraged to create so many stores when more than 2,000 stores are now vacant on the lower East Side and another thousand of them are rented by the month and without leases for as low as \$25?

These questions must be answered intelligently before long. They are a bold challenge to any group of developers who believe that stores can and should carry the greatest part of the burden in a model housing venture even if the cost of land is \$10 or more a square foot.

## A RECENT PROPOSAL—MODERNISM RAMPANT

The latest plan that has been put forward for the development of the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site was recently exhibited in New York in the form of models with accompanying drawings at an exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art.

A firm of Philadelphia architects had taken the Chrystie Street site and shown what they proposed to put upon it. The plan contemplates the development of 24 separate buildings, 9 stories in height, stretching for the entire distance of 7 blocks, developed with apartments of 3 and 4 rooms. It is estimated by the architects that these buildings will accommodate 1512 families and can be rented at a rental of \$10.95 per room per month. In addition there are to be 85 stores or shops on the ground floor confined to the cross streets, keeping these off the main North and South thoroughfares of Chrystie and Forsyth Streets. It is estimated that these stores will rent for as high as \$100 a month.

On the financial side the scheme is extremely shaky. According to Joseph Platzker, executive officer of the East Side Chamber of Commerce which is supporting the project, the promoters of the scheme offer to pay the city of New York \$192,636 a year for the lease of the land, which Mr. Platzker states is the equivalent of 4% on a land value of \$15.75 per square foot.

We are not interested in what percentage that annual rental is on any imaginary, arbitrary or fanciful land value that may be suggested by any group. The fact remains that the City has spent \$5,000,000 for the site. A rental of \$192,636 per year on land that has cost the City \$5,000,000 represents a return to the City of 3.8% per year on the investment.

Any model housing scheme, therefore, that is projected on that basis will have to meet the criticism both in the courts and with the public of being nothing more or less than a municipally subsidized scheme, so long as the City leases the land for anything less than



the normal rate of interest. The city is borrowing money at the present time at 6% per annum to pay for this very thing among other things. Anything less than the market rate for money is not to be considered.

The scheme is also extremely shaky on the estimated revenue from rental of stores. We have referred to the criticism made by the East Side Chamber of Commerce of the earlier scheme and the proposal contained in it to have 300 stores at a rental of \$100 per month. We think that the criticisms that were advanced by the East Side Chamber of Commerce with regard to this feature of the former scheme apply equally to the new scheme. The only difference, apparently is that in the former scheme there were to be 300 stores whereas here the number has been limited to 85. There is still a great lot of vacant store space on the East Side much of which is being rented as low as \$25 a month and only from month to month.

With regard to the design of the structure, there is much that may be criticised. In the first place, it is proposed to build these buildings to a height of 9 stories, which is approximately 90 feet or over. To build 9-story tenements on the Lower East Side in that congested quarter, shutting out the light for miles from neighboring buildings—which have been thus far limited to 6 stories in height—is little short of a crime. If the zoning regulations and the provisions of the multiple dwelling law do not prevent such construction, both of these should be promptly amended by the friends of better housing in New York to see that no such development is permitted. When 9-story units are once started in that crowded section, it will be difficult to stop the trend. The whole district ought to be developed not with 9-story buildings but if it were possible with 3 or 4 story buildings.

Another serious defect of the design is that the buildings are built in what may be termed solid construction. They are not Garden Apartments. There are not cheerful and large sunny open spaces in the interior of the block, susceptible of development with trees and shrubs, such as are found in the more recent and better model housing developments in the City, like the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments in Harlem or the Amalgamated Development in the Bronx. It is all bricks and mortar, the buildings being built with U-shaped courts open to the street.

The buildings in their appearance are of the "battleship" design that has become so commonplace now in Germany with horizontal lines emphasized and looking like some modern factory, consisting chiefly of glass and steel and with but a minimum of walls. As a conception of "Home", the buildings are certainly extraordinary in appearance.

One feature of the buildings which has been very much advertised is the fantastic scheme for so-called play-grounds on the ground floor, putting the building on stilts, as the architects express it. What really happens is that, instead of renting the ground floors for stores, they have developed them as they would have been developed for stores but omitting the store windows. The space thus made available is to be utilized as a playground—God save the mark! Being on the street level, being open to the noise and dust of the street, they are the very last things that one should desire as a play space. In order to be utilized at all electric light would have to be maintained at all times and the problem of keeping these spaces clean and of making the apartments above them quiet and livable would seem almost overwhelming.

We predict that were these buildings to be built with this extraordinary feature, it would be only a matter of a few weeks before these “playgrounds” would be turned into push-cart markets. What life above these would be like and the detriment that would result to real estate values in the neighborhood hardly needs comment.

In addition to these objections—as if enough had not been done in encroaching upon the light and air of the community—it is also proposed, contrary to the law and to the conditions under which the rest of the city has been built—to have these buildings straddle the various cross streets.

Whether it is this project that the Mayor is contemplating at the present time, and which he has stated “is so attractive that if it were made public it would result in an exodus from Park Avenue to the Lower East Side”, we do not know; but inasmuch as Andrew J. Thomas—the well-known architect and the architect for Mr. Rockefeller’s ventures—appeared actively in support of the Administration bills at the hearing before the Governor in which it was sought to give the City power to mortgage the fee of the land on this site, we are rather inclined to the belief that the modernistic “battleship” scheme which we have just described is not the one that the Administration has under consideration at present.

## NO HOUSING ON THIS SITE

While it may be difficult for the Administration to admit that it made a mistake when it acquired the Chrystie-Forsyth Street site for housing purposes, the Mayor would be well advised if he completely abandoned this project. For reasons already pointed out, the site is quite unsuitable for modern housing. The project would seem to be



unconstitutional, in fact, in direct violation of the Constitution in three important respects, and we have no doubt that the courts would so hold if the case ever got into the courts—as it seems likely to do.

No housing scheme that will reflect credit upon the Administration can be developed on this site. It is too greatly handicapped by having to start with a land cost of \$5,000,000, which makes the housing of working people on this land entirely out of the question.

The Mayor would be wise not only to give up developing this site with housing, but he would be equally wise to utilize it in the manner which has been urged upon him by the Regional Plan Association. That body, as recently as last June, presented to the City Administration a practical and definite plan for the utilization of this property.

Instead of using these lots of but 125 feet in depth for housing, the Regional Plan proposed that the open area created between Chrystie and Forsyth Streets from Houston Street down to Manhattan Bridge be left open and devoted to a combination of a depressed roadway for passenger vehicles together with parks and landscaped spaces.

The roadway would be a link in an express highway that it is proposed to extend down Second Avenue from the Harlem River as part of an improved system of traffic circulation for Manhattan, and providing especially quick and easy access to the municipal and civic centre at City Hall and the downtown business district.

In presenting this plan George McAneny, President of the Regional Plan Association, discussed the question of the probable unwillingness of the City Administration to abandon its housing project because of the money that has already been spent upon it. On this point he said:

We anticipate that it will be argued that the city has incurred great expense in acquiring the Chrystie-Forsyth property; that it should recoup itself for this expense by disposing of the land for building instead of keeping it open; and that, as part of its purpose was to provide improved housing, it would be failing in its duty if it did not carry out this object.

We admit that the expenditure has been high, but not more than the city has had to spend in other places to obtain street widenings. We think keeping this area open for the purpose we have named will be more profitable to the city than if it were to permit it to be built upon. Furthermore, we believe that the large area of the East Side between the proposed parkway and the East River will be increased in value and become more attractive for residence as a result of using the area in this way, and that indirectly housing conditions will be more improved if the area is kept open than if it is built upon.

The method proposed by the Regional Plan Association of treating the present cleared area is in some respects unique. They pro-

pose that a four-lane depressed roadway should be constructed down the middle of the blocks between the two streets, the remainder of the blocks being used for parks and planted sloping banks. Chrystie and Forsyth Streets would be maintained at their present level as local service streets. Five of the cross-town streets, viz., Canal, Grand, Delancey, Stanton and Houston Streets would be carried over the sunken way by bridges. On the two remaining streets, Hester and Rivington Streets, there would be pedestrian bridges only.

The depressed road would be carried south along the Manhattan Bridge and come to grade near Division Street. From that point East Broadway provides a direct route to the civic centre and City Hall, and the nearby marginal way an equally good route to the financial district. A northbound ramp would connect with Canal Street and northbound and southbound ramps would connect with Houston Street. The depressed roadway south of Houston Street would be limited to passenger vehicles and would have easy connections with the two upper-level roadways on the Manhattan Bridge.

Commenting on this plan, Mr. McAneny points out that a magnificent avenue 300 feet wide from building line to building line would thus be provided between the Manhattan Bridge and the south end of Second Avenue. Private enterprise would be stimulated by such a large scale project and its nearness to the downtown business and civic centre to improve the surrounding property, so that the city would in the end lose nothing as a result of reducing its taxable area.

It is hoped that the City Administration will have the wisdom to adopt this farseeing and practical plan.

## THE FUTURE OF NEW YORK'S LOWER EAST SIDE

What is to happen to what is perhaps the world's most picturesque and extensive slum—the Lower East Side of New York? In a recent issue\* we discussed this question and pointed out changes that have been taking place in that great area and some of the suggestions that have been proposed with regard to its future.

That was over a year ago. While there have been few physical changes that have taken place in this section of the city since that time, a great deal of water—of discussion at least—has gone over the dam.

Allen Street—probably the most depressing street in the world—will soon be a thing of the past. That ancient haunt of vice and misery

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\* See "*Housing*", September, 1930, pp. 160-165.



is having the light let in. Last summer contracts were let by the Borough President of Manhattan to widen this narrow and hideous street at a cost of over \$244,000. The street widening involves the demolition of about 100 buildings on the East side of Allen Street extending from Delancey Street on the north to Division Street on the south. The purpose of the widening is to meet the city's increasing traffic needs and to establish a new north and south highway which will be the broadest highway available to traffic, extending from the Battery on the south to First Avenue on the north. Between Delancey Street and First Avenue, the northern spur of this new highway, Allen Street has already been widened. The widened thoroughfare is to be connected with South Street, its southern exit, by a wide highway extending through Pike Street which is but five blocks in length.

This part of the Lower East Side will certainly be revolutionized when these public improvements are completed; for the widening plan contemplates a central parkway 38 feet in width flanked on each side by roadways wide enough for 3 streams of traffic abreast. The central portion will be devoted to children's playgrounds and small park areas shaded by trees and with benches for people to sit upon. Drinking fountains will be installed at both ends of each park space.

The new traffic way will afford an important means of reaching the Manhattan Bridge from the upper East Side, and will also improve the approach to the Williamsburg Bridge. When the improvements are completed, Allen Street will be 138 feet in width from building line to building line.

How long it takes to overcome the inertia of city government is forcibly illustrated by this improvement. On the occasion of the ceremonies beginning the widening last July, George McAneny, President of the Regional Plan Association, recalled the fact that 35 years ago he had been on a committee to push the widening of Allen Street.

## WHAT OF THE EAST SIDE'S FUTURE?

With these important improvements made upon the western boundaries of this vast area—improvements which are bound to have a radical and far-reaching effect—the question naturally arises “What is to happen to the rest of this district?”

The area is a vast one—we refer to that part of New York bounded by Fourteenth Street on the north, Fourth Avenue and the Bowery on the west, Manhattan Bridge and the River on the south and the East River on the east. According to a survey made by Arthur C. Holden

and Associates two years ago, this territory comprises an area of 1133 acres or 49,365,400 square feet.

Important changes—not merely in population but in values and the physical aspect of the district, in economic and industrial conditions—have been going on in recent years. In that earlier article already referred to, we pointed out the great changes in population which had been taking place.

Joseph Platzker, Secretary of the East Side Chamber of Commerce, in one of the studies that he has been making of the East Side—studies which represent a distinct contribution in the fields of city planning and housing—pointed out a few months ago the changes in the assessed values of property in that district. Contrary to expectations, the decrease in assessed values has been comparatively slight, a general decrease of values of something over 5% occurring in a 50-block area for the year 1932—a decrease which is rightly termed insignificant.

#### ASSESSMENTS AND MORTGAGES

In an interesting article published in the *East Side Chamber News* of last October, Mr. Platzker sets forth in detail the changes in assessed valuations that have taken place in various parts of the Lower East Side. Presenting in tabular form the assessments for purposes of taxation of various blocks, he contrasts these assessments for the years 1932, 1931, 1930 and 1920. Mr. Platzker points out that the total assessed valuations of this property in 1932 far exceed those for 1920, when the district had twice the population it has at present, and a much larger number of business establishments. This study offers a fertile field for those interested in the part that high land values play in slum clearance projects.

Further interesting light is thrown upon conditions in this vast area by a Report made a few months ago by Mr. Platzker on the subject of unmortgaged land in that territory. As Mr. Platzker points out, for more than three decades the privately owned land in this district has been generally recognized as the most heavily mortgaged land of its kind in the city. At least half of it, he says, for many years was subordinated to more than two mortgages.

His investigation, however, indicates quite a different condition to-day. He finds over 2,000,000 square feet of privately owned land in this area of 1½ square miles free and clear of mortgage to-day—which, he points out, if it were all assembled in a single area would equal an



area of 25 square blocks of the predominant size in that part of the city, viz., each 200 x 400 feet.

He further calls attention to the fact that the total mortgages on land and improvements in this section since 1920 have dropped at least 10%, although the total assessments on the area in question have gone up more than 20% in the same period. He adds, that although savings banks, title companies, insurance companies, trust companies and other financial institutions hold more than \$60,000,000 worth of mortgages on the Lower East Side, it is safe to say that private individuals, estates and even in some cases members of the foreign nobility have equally as large a mortgage investment in the property in this district.

Mr. Platzker presents some interesting facts with regard to absentee landlordism. He finds one property owned by a person residing in St. Albans, England; another in Canterbury, England; another in Lindenthal, Germany; another in Paris; another in Vienna; another in Ontario, Canada; another in Los Angeles; another in Tacoma; and even one in Lucerne, Switzerland.

The developments on this unmortgaged land are of very considerable interest. 60% of it is "improved" with old-law tenements which are more than 30 years old.

## THE HOMES OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE

What probably will have most interest for our readers will be found in the facts brought out by Mr. Platzker in his studies of the housing conditions of this district.

The greatest number of buildings in this vast area were found in the year 1896, when there were more structures than at any time in its 2½ centuries of history. The peak of construction was between 1888 and 1895 when hundreds of new 4, 5, and 6-story tenements were erected to accommodate the vast incoming tide of immigration.

At the present time, the district contains 9,779 buildings in an area of 1¾ square miles—a decrease of more than 2,000 houses since 1896. As naturally might be expected, the so-called old-law tenements greatly predominate, and the industrial buildings reach a greater height and are more antiquated. Street widenings, the erection of bridges and other similar improvements have had a tendency to reduce the number of houses in the district in recent years.

Some interesting facts are presented by Mr. Platzker with regard to the height of the existing buildings in this area. His study shows that out of a total of 9,779 buildings of all kinds, of which 8,079 are

tenements and dwellings, there are but 197 buildings, including commercial and industrial buildings that exceed 6 stories in height. Buildings of various heights were found as follows: 6-story buildings 1921; 5-story buildings 3781; 4-story buildings 1859; 3-story buildings 1375; 2-story buildings 393; and 1-story buildings 253. 160 buildings that were 7 stories in height were discovered, as were also 12 buildings of 8 stories in height.

## THE KINDS OF BUILDINGS

With regard to the types of structure, these studies show that of the 9,779 total buildings, there were 8,079 tenements and dwellings, 25 elevator apartment houses, 34 lodging houses, 755 warehouses and loft buildings, 8 office buildings, 130 factories, 275 stables, 44 theatres and 429 of a miscellaneous character including churches, synagogues, schools, etc. From which it is seen that 83% of all the structures in the district are residential buildings.

Many interesting facts are presented with regard to the ownership of this vast property. The average city block in the district in question has at least 20 different owners—and sometimes more than 30. Mr. Platzker reaches the conclusion that it is safe to say that there are in the district in question at least 6,000 separate owners, with at least half of them holding but single parcels.

Contrary to the picturesque statements that had been made in the press that more than 25% of the houses in the district had been abandoned and are unoccupied, a careful investigation reveals that but a fraction more than 3½% of the total number of structures are either boarded up or abandoned. While the laws for many years have forbidden the erection of new wooden buildings in the heart of the city, it is interesting to find that the Lower East Side has as many as 50 of such structures, which, it is true, constitute but ½ of 1% of the total number.

That the situation on the East Side so far as improvements are concerned is somewhat static, is disclosed by a study made of the district by the Tenement House Commissioner, included in the 10th Annual Report of that official. This showed that but 20 new-law tenement houses were erected in the area in question in the period from 1918 to 1929, accommodating 906 families in 3,091 rooms, only 23 such buildings being erected in a 13-year period.



## THE REAR HOUSE COMING INTO ITS OWN

A number of people have discovered what we pointed out nearly 40 years ago that there were rear houses and rear houses; and that given right conditions, the rear house was a very much more attractive type of dwelling than the ordinary front house, and infinitely better than the so-called "double-decker" tenement.

Our readers will recall the studies made by Mr. Platzker a few months ago showing the extent at that time on the Lower East Side of the so-called "rear house empire".\* Mr. Platzker in his study of this subject brought out the fact that there were a little over a year ago still standing on the Lower East Side, 431 rear houses housing a population of over 10,000 people.

According to Mr. Platzker, there is now on foot an interesting attempt to modernize some of these rear houses, shrewd investors realizing how attractive they can be made and what excellent homes many of them make—shut away from the noise of the street, especially where there is ample yard space at back and front of them so as to permit adequate light and air.

Beginning in the Tompkin's Square section, viz., the neighborhood around East 6th Street between Avenue A and First Avenue, adventurous operators have bought up some of these rear dwellings and proceeded to modernize them. Three rear houses which have been treated to this modernizing bath have already been completed with great success. They contain 18 2-room apartments and three 3-room apartments. The 2-room apartments are now renting from \$30 to \$40 a month and the 3-room apartments at \$50 a month. Six months ago only 8 families lived in these three dwellings, paying from \$4 to \$5 per room per month. The former apartments had no hot water or any modern improvements and used only gas, while the toilet accommodations were in the yard.

To-day, all apartments have bathrooms with built-in showers, colored tile, brass plumbing, paneled walls, hardwood oak floors highly waxed, fireproof halls and stairways. The 3-room apartments are even equipped with frigidaire, and have built-in shelves for books and attractive open skylights. Like many other apartments, they also have log burning fireplaces.

Mr. Platzker states that after visiting these modernized apartments, he finds that they have a charm of coziness that compares favorably with anything of its kind in the Greenwich Village section.

That the old order changeth is once more made evident.

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\* See "*Housing*", September, 1930, pp. 165-167.

## RE-PLANNING THE EAST SIDE

That this vast area is evidently in for important changes which will ultimately revolutionize the district is quite evident from the various movements that are already on foot. That whatever is done should be done in accordance with a comprehensive and intelligent plan based upon scientific knowledge and relation to the plan of the whole city, becomes more and more evident. The day of unrelated piecemeal improvements that has hitherto existed is at an end.

In place of such uncoordinated and unrelated efforts, there is to be in future intelligent leadership with co-operative mass-movement by all of the forces and interests that are involved.

Stimulated and created by the intelligent leadership of the East Side Chamber of Commerce there was formed some months ago the Lower East Side Planning Association backed by the banks, trust companies, mortgage institutions and other financial bodies who have large investments in the property in this area and united with the smaller property owners of the district gathered together in the East Side Chamber of Commerce.

Last Fall the executives of five big savings banks in this section came together and formed the nucleus of the Lower East Side Planning Association. Since that time they have been joined in this movement by one or more title companies and have the co-operation of the East Side Chamber of Commerce, the Lower East Side Community Council and the Greater New York Tax Payers' Association. The mortgages held by these co-operating financial institutions exceed \$65,000,000. For short periods this group has employed a number of outstanding architects and city planners in New York to study the problems involved.

We understand that a fund of \$40,000 has been subscribed and made available for the scientific re-planning of the district to cover the civic improvements needed in this section through a period of years, and an outstanding city planner of national reputation employed to direct this work. Those responsible for this movement have a clear understanding of the problems that confront them and the objectives to be attained by this new co-operative effort, as is evidenced by a statement issued some months ago by Orrin C. Lester, Vice-President of the Bowery Savings Bank, and at that time Chairman of the Board of Directors of the East Side Chamber of Commerce, and long associated in various movements for the betterment of the district in question.

The problems that confronted the group were stated by Mr. Lester at that time as follows:



The outstanding elements of a plan for the Lower East Side should be a modern zoning code, a lay out of street widenings, traffic arteries, transportation, parks, sewers, public buildings, recreational facilities, and every improvement that goes to make for a modernly planned section, and at the same time properly coordinated and harmonized with the general plans for progressive improvements of the Greater City.

That Mr. Lester and his associates fully recognize the fact that no proper development of this great territory can be had without the fullest co-operation with the city officials involved, was made evident by his statement at the time that the experts to be employed by the newly formed Lower East Side Planning Association would work in close harmony with the city planning commissioner of the city, the borough president and other departments of the city government, as well as with the Regional Plan of New York and the Regional Plan Association.

How fundamental such co-operation is to success in this movement, was clearly foreshadowed in a statement issued by Mr. Lester about a year ago. At that time, he asked the following pregnant questions:

Under the zoning code that governs the lower East Side now, who knows what the nature of the future development of this section may be? How much may be residential, how much business, where the trade centers, if any, shall be? And even more important, who knows if he builds a fine apartment house but that there will be established on the block adjoining him or on the same block some business of such nature as to depreciate his investment and make living conditions undesirable?

Who knows whether any practical steps will be taken to enlarge the park and playground area of the lower East Side—which now amounts to less than 29 acres, or about one acre to 14,000 persons—a condition that will tend to drive people away from this locality rather than attract them here as permanent residents?

Who knows when the pushcart business which is cluttering up the streets that are needed for traffic purposes is going to be removed from those streets and centralized under proper control and respectable sanitary conditions?

Who knows what streets are to be widened on the lower East Side, or what through traffic arteries are needed and where they should be located, or what sort of transportation system will be developed?

In short, who knows what the future development is likely to be? Who has a programme to make even a practical beginning toward reconstruction? Obviously, nobody professes to know these things for the very simple reason that no scientific study has been made of the district with a view of analyzing its fundamental needs and coordinating those needs into a programme of reconstruction looking ahead to the long future.

The East Side Chamber of Commerce rightly points out that the first step in the development of any intelligent scheme for the future welfare of this district is the re-zoning of the entire district.

When the Zoning Commission of New York in its pioneer work attempting to lay out a scheme for the zoning of the city came to the great East Side they frankly evaded their responsibilities and simply marked the district as an "unclassified" district. Of course, they fully realized that they were only postponing the evil day and that sooner or later this vast territory—which at that time seemed to present rather insuperable problems—would have to be intelligently zoned.

That time has now come and more than fully come. The East Side Chamber of Commerce realizing this has already petitioned the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to take up the zoning of the district, to re-zone a portion of it for residential purposes, with a height limit of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the width of the street. The Chamber rightly appreciates that this vast section which is so predominantly residential to-day will continue to be a residential district and should be planned with that purpose in view.

### "KNICKERBOCKER VILLAGE"

That others realize the possibilities inherent in the re-planning of the Lower East Side and its development as a residential quarter for the white-collar class has recently been evidenced by the announcement of the plans of Fred F. French, developer of the Tudor City development in the East 42nd Street district.

A few years ago this real estate operator saw the possibilities of completely revolutionizing a section of the city conveniently accessible to the mid-town district, but which had been given up for many years past to a low-grade tenement occupancy. Quietly buying up land which at that time was low priced in the district near 42nd Street and the East River, this operator in the space of a few months completely revolutionized the whole section. The old run-down tenements were demolished, the sites cleared and new modern skyscraping apartment houses with ample open spaces developed in their place. Literally a new city—which he very appropriately called "Tudor City" because of its architectural style—came into being almost over night. Widely advertised and with the "walk to work" slogan as a means of popularizing it, this development soon became an assured success.

In recent months this same operator has been quietly buying up vast property holdings on the Lower East Side with the same purpose in view. Until recently there was much speculation and discussion as to who the purchasers of these properties were, as the whole opera-



tions were shrouded in great secrecy, dummy corporations having been formed for the purpose. For a long time it was thought that Mr. Rockefeller was back of these purchases and that a great model housing enterprise was contemplated. The latter surmise was correct, but the former was not. For, last December when application was made to the Tax Commissioners for a review of the assessments on the properties involved, it developed that these properties had been bought by Fred F. French and his associates with the idea of replanning and rebuilding the entire area and establishing on the lower East Side a new residential development for the white-collar class.

Later announcements made by Mr. French give some of the more important details of this project which he has named "Knickerbocker Village". The area already purchased comprises 14½ acres on which there are now nearly 400 houses of every character and size. It is expected that within 5 years this whole area will be redeveloped at a cost of \$50,000,000 with modern apartments housing 10,000 people. The first building on this site is now under construction. It is to be known as the Nathan Hale Apartments. It will be 12 stories in height and will contain about 200 suites of 3 and 4-room apartments and will occupy a site with a 100-foot frontage on Market Street and a similar frontage on Henry Street. Preliminary estimates contemplate an average rental of \$20 per room per month, though it is hoped that it may be possible to make it somewhat lower.

It is thus seen that a private developer without waiting for the City to act and without considering any replanning of the street system or the park areas of that portion of the city, has jumped into the field and taken the decisive step.

That the new development is on sound lines there can be no doubt. The future of this section of the city is clearly residential and should be for a white-collar group.

There are two possible danger points which we trust Mr. French will surmount. One is the adverse time at which the development is started. It is a nice question whether in these times of financial depression the projector of this scheme will find it possible to swing it from the financial side.

The other objection—which we consider a more serious one—is the fact that this vast area is not being cleared at one time and a complete new environment created. We very much fear that the new apartments will not be tenanted by the class which its projectors have in view, unless at the same time those neighborhood amenities are provided which such a class naturally demands—the right kind of schools

for their children, the right kind of shops, the right kind of amusement centres, the right kind of recreation facilities. Though all these are unquestionably contemplated by the promoters of this project as part of the necessary ultimate development, their absence at the beginning may prove a stumbling block to the success of the scheme.

## REPLANNING FUNDAMENTAL

How important this re-planning of a great section of a great city is, is realized when one studies the recommendations made on this subject by the Regional Plan Association of New York. In a 10-page bulletin issued a year ago, the Regional Plan Association went into the fundamental facts with regard to this section of the city, tracing its historical development, its physical, social and economic problems and outlining a scheme for vast public improvements in connection with its redevelopment.

Summarizing its conclusions the Regional Plan Association has the following to say with regard to the re-planning of New York's Lower East Side:

Slum clearance by the investment of private capital in reconstruction is desirable and deserves every reasonable encouragement. Such undertakings carried out by limited-dividend corporations actuated by altruistic motives, or by capital so applied as to take advantage of special legislation, have done good. Great modern cities like London and New York have now had a long experience with such endeavors and many varieties of experiments have been tried. To date, the lesson which all this experience teaches is that such experiments have high value as demonstrations but do not enlist nearly enough capital to have an important quantitative effect. If private capital is to re-create a large neighborhood, it is essential that the whole neighborhood shall be impressed with a quality that invites the investment of money for profit. This can be done by improving the neighborhood's communications, and by improving its amenities by means of parks, playgrounds and a well devised system of local zoning regulations.

Such measures are needed to accelerate the rehabilitation of the Lower East Side. The process will take many years at best. But the opportunity is the greatest of its kind ever presented in an American city. If New York cannot bring itself to deal with the situation in a large and vigorous way, it is quite possible that the Lower East Side will continue for another generation or half-century to be both a sore spot in the city's social economy and a wasted area in its assessment map. Wise measures might, in the course of a decade or two, convert it into a salubrious, hopeful, prosperous district.

It would seem as if revolutionary changes would before long take place in this large area of a great city, and that even in the days of men now living this notorious and famous slum district may disappear and



lose that quality which has made it both famous and infamous for so many years.

The one fly in the ointment is the necessary slowing up of all public improvements in these times of financial depression. With the City facing difficulties in its financing and the insistent demand of the banking interests that it shall retrench and postpone all public improvements that can be postponed until a better financial and economic situation arrives, these plans for the improvement of the Lower East Side, insofar as they are dependent upon the expenditure of public funds, must necessarily mark time.

It is to be hoped, however, that the intelligent re-planning of this area, which the Lower East Side Planning Association has set itself to perform, will proceed with all the greater rapidity. It is an opportunity that should not be lost. When the city's financial situation once more permits a resumption of public improvements, those interested should be ready to present a plan upon which the City can proceed. That this will be done we have no doubt.

## MUNICIPAL HOUSING TO THE FORE

### THE TRIBE OF REFORMERS

In the face of the demonstrated inability\* of the municipal government to cope with the housing problem and of its utter unfitness to be entrusted with the functions of building and managing the homes of the people, one might have expected that the advocates of municipal housing—no matter how much they may be seduced by a theory—would have had sufficient intelligence to have postponed their efforts to bring about the realization of this idea in which they so strongly believe.

But not at all. The mere fact that the City has shown how utterly impossible it is to entrust it with these powers, seems to suggest to the advocates of municipal housing the wisdom of handing over to these public officials these vast and important functions.

The tribe of reformers is certainly strangely constituted. We are inclined to agree with F. F. Van de Water, an author and newspaper man of long experience, who some years ago thus described them:

Reformers are like that. They have little salutary stealth and no patience whatever. They disregard all aspects of the campaign but its final objective. They are unwilling even to march for seven days around the walls of Jericho. The city's walls must collapse immediately. Reformers ignore the lessons of evolution and disregard the principles of drama. All they want is the ultimate climax and they demand that at once. They solve their propositions hind side before, roaring "Quod erat demonstratum" into the shocked ears of the bystanders and setting forth the steps whereby they have arrived at this conclusion later, if at all.

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\* See pages 8-12.

At a time when the City faces bankruptcy, at a time when the City has had to curtail every one of its vast public improvements amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars because of its financial condition, at a time when the City is having to pay almost double the rate of interest that it ordinarily pays on short term loans, at a time when the united bankers of the City have laid down conditions to the public officials with regard to the curtailment of public expenditures which must be met if funds are to be provided for the necessary expenses of government, and at a time when the City has demonstrated by 3 years of mishandling, neglect, illegal action and wavering and uncertain policy its utter inability to deal with the housing of the people—a group of reformers, ardent in the belief that the solution of the housing problem is to be found in what they now call “public” housing, come forward and urge upon the community that the safeguards which the framers of our government wrote into the Constitution so as to protect the fundamental stability of the financial structure of our institutions, should be calmly set aside, and that the State itself and the various communities throughout the state should be allowed to impose heavy burdens of taxation upon the taxpayers, loan their credit and embark upon the wholesale building of private homes.

The Constitution of New York State, like the constitutions of most other states in the United States, contains two provisions, both written into the fundamental law at the time of the creation of our government and both seeking to protect the citizens of the state from rash and ill-considered action that would tend to bring the state’s credit to so low a pitch that bankruptcy would inevitably result.

Those two provisions are in effect these. That neither the State nor any of its subdivisions—the counties, cities, villages or towns—shall lend their credit for other than a public purpose; and a further provision that private property shall not be taken for other than a public use.

Finding that these provisions of the Constitution stand in the way of carrying out the policy of putting the Government into the housing business, and of making the taxpayers at large carry the burdens of subsidized housing for a small group of citizens who prefer to spend their money in other ways, our reformer friends blithely say—“Oh very well then, let us amend the Constitution!”

At the last session of the legislature two measures were introduced emanating from this group. One amends the Constitution by providing that none of its existing provisions shall have any bearing or relation, or affect adversely in any way any laws which the legislature may



pass providing for housing for the inhabitants of the state. It authorizes the legislature to make such provision and to empower the various subdivisions of the state, its counties, cities, towns and villages to do likewise, and to use the credit of the State or of such subdivisions in aid of private corporations or organizations that may be created to provide such housing under such conditions as the legislature may deem proper.

The other measure amends the General City Law by adding a new section which authorizes cities, towns and villages to acquire land and erect dwellings, to raise the necessary funds therefor by use of the credit of the State or City, to rent such dwellings at rentals adequate to meet the cost of operation, including interest and amortization charges, and to maintain, manage, administer and operate such dwellings.

Evidently advised that there is some mysterious hocus-pocus in reference to the basis of the police power, they have deemed it wise to include in this measure the abracadabra of reference to "public health, morals, comfort, convenience and safety".

It is unnecessary to add that neither of these measures was enacted into law by the legislature. In fact, neither emerged from committee.

Following the adjournment of the legislature, this group organized a meeting in New York to promote the cause of what they call "public" housing, at which the sponsors of these measures got together and talked about their theories.

The Conference was not without interest, for it disclosed that the advocates of these measures actually propose that the State or its cities shall lend up to 95% of the cost of such dwellings. Who they expect will buy the bonds issued by the State on any such shaky foundation is not disclosed. What reckless financing this is, is realized when it is recalled that under the laws of New York state to-day, no insurance companies, banks or other financial authorities are permitted to lend more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the cost of a building project.

That these "radicals" intend to discuss, at least, an ambitious programme is evidenced by the proposals which were outlined on this occasion.

Their programme includes housing sessions and open conferences and conventions, public lectures on housing at some institution of learning, the creation of an exhibit on municipal housing, the drafting of a model city-housing bill, the printing of a symposium of opinions favorable to the low-rent project, the presenting of questionnaires to candidates to the legislature seeking to commit them on the question of

public housing, and the insertion of a plank on public housing in the platforms of both Parties at the next state election.

Fortunately, under the structure of our government before changes in the basic law of the state, viz., the Constitution, can be made, such changes must be voted upon by all the voters of the state, after having been approved by two successive Senates.

We figure that even though this group should succeed in pledging some candidates to sponsor "public" housing, it will be many years before the sober sense of the voters will be willing to discard the safeguards that have been written into the Constitution to protect the soundness of the state's credit, or to grant an unlimited charter to the cities and other communities of the state to enter upon wild-cat and unsound schemes of public enterprise.

Our reformer friends who so strongly believe in public housing apparently have overlooked the fact that this is not Russia but America.

## LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS

Following this Conference on "public" housing, two weeks later another group interested in improving housing conditions in New York City called an all-day Conference to discuss large-scale operations as a means of improving housing conditions in our great cities.

This Conference was called jointly by the Welfare Council of New York and the Housing Association of the City of New York. The principal speaker on this occasion was Alfred K. Stern, Chairman of the Committee on Large-Scale Operations of President Hoover's Housing Conference and Director of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, under whose guidance and leadership the Boulevard Garden Apartments for Negroes in Chicago has been developed and is being managed.

In addition to Mr. Stern, discussion of the problem was had from various points of view by persons active in other fields than housing, but interested in housing. These included Robert D. Kohn, President of the American Institute of Architects, Andrew J. Eken, a builder of New York City, and a representative of organized labor—all of whom discussed the relations of the building industry to large-scale housing.

At an evening session presided over by Wm. Sloane Coffin, Vice-President of the City Housing Corporation, the financing of large-scale housing projects was discussed from various points of view. Among those who took part in this discussion were Orrin C. Lester, Vice-President of the Bowery Savings Bank and President of the Lower East Side Planning Association, Willard I. Hamilton, Vice-President



of the Prudential Life Insurance Company, under whose guidance the Prudential's housing scheme in Newark has been developed, Paul Blanshard, the Executive Director of the City Affairs Committee and a leading advocate of "public" housing, and Abraham E. Kazan, the able President of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation.

In announcing this Conference, its projectors stated that it was called "to consider for the first time large-scale operations as a solution of New York City's housing problem".

This is certainly a striking bit of news and one that will surprise the State Housing Board, which for a number of years past has done nothing else but devote itself to the development of large-scale operations with that purpose in view—and thus far quite successfully. It will also, we think, surprise Mr. Rockefeller whose financing of the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments and others has met with extraordinary success. It must also strike a similar chord with Aaron Rabinowitz and Lieutenant-Governor Lehman, whose financing of the splendid Amalgamated Housing Corporation in the Bronx, as well as the East Side Development at the foot of Grand Street would seem to have demonstrated effectively the place that large-scale operations plays in aiding the housing problem in this city.

Why in the name of all that is intelligent this group of Reformers should have chosen New York City as the scene of their missionary efforts—a city that has done and is doing more in the field of large-scale operations than all of the other cities of the country put together—defies understanding.

It is equally difficult to understand why they should have urged renewed effort in this field at this particular time when the city is literally alive with recent and projected large-scale operations—witness the millions of dollars to-day being invested in this field in the enterprises described in this journal alone—Phipps Gardens, Celtic Park, Flag Court, Clason Point—to mention some of the newest ones.

Large-scale operation is an excellent thing, but it has its limitations. It can no more furnish a complete solution for the housing problem of a great city than can any other single form of effort. As we have pointed out for many years, the housing problem is a highly complex one and has many aspects. Its solution cannot be found in any single form of effort, but in numerous forms of effort extended over a long period of time.

There is, of course, no limit to the opportunities in this field, provided an investing public can be found that will be content with the

lesser returns that come from limited-dividend corporations, and provided also that the taxpayers do not rise in their wrath and wipe out the tax exemption feature that has characterized these projects in recent years.

It is hardly to be doubted if large-scale production of housing should be organized in this city on a comprehensive basis, that there would be an irresistible demand from the taxpayers of the city to do away with the tax exemption feature.

## RECENT HOUSING PROJECTS IN NEW YORK

That all of the recent activity in the housing field in New York City has not been merely tumult and shouting nor confined to mere discussion of the subject, is evidenced by a number of recent developments in the housing field by which new and attractive houses have actually been made available for the people of that city.

### THE NEW PHIPPS GARDEN APARTMENTS

One of the most recent developments of this kind was opened to the public a few months ago. This is the Phipps Garden Apartments in the Sunnyside part of Queens, adjoining the existing development of the City Housing Corporation.

The trustees of the million dollar fund given by the late Henry Phipps, one of the country's great millionaires, to provide suitable housing conditions for working people in New York City when they recently decided to make a new development, very wisely decided to make it this time, not in the crowded East Side or West Side of Manhattan, but in the less densely developed section of Queens.

What is certainly the most "open" development of this kind that has been built in New York City since 1890 is the new Phipps Garden Apartments. Housing a white-collar class, these houses located at 50th Street and 39th Avenue in Queens consist of 22 buildings containing 343 separate apartments; 215 of these apartments are in 6-story buildings with elevators and the remaining ones in 4-story "walkups". The elevator apartments range in size from apartments of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  rooms to 5 rooms with outside porch, the rentals of which range from \$40 per month for the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  room suites to \$100 a month for the apartments of 5 rooms with porch. The non-elevator apartments range from suites of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  rooms to suites of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  rooms, with rentals ranging from \$44 a month to \$89 a month.



An interesting feature of the rental scheme which we think is new in this class of realty is the very substantial reduction made in the monthly rent where leases for more than a year are entered into. For example, in the case of the 3-room apartments in the elevator apartment buildings the rents on a 1-year lease range from \$58 to \$66 a month. If, however, a lease is made for 2 years, these rents are reduced to from \$55 to \$63; and if a 3-year lease is made, are reduced to from \$52 to \$60 a month. By taking a 3-year lease, therefore, on a 3-room apartment, instead of a 1-year lease, it is seen that a saving of \$6 a month in rent accrues to the tenant—a substantial consideration with most tenants.

We have referred to this development as being one of the most “open” developments heretofore projected in America. This is realized when it is understood that the buildings occupy but 40% of the land. They are built in the form of a hollow square the interior of which is given up to gardens planted with trees and landscaped. For most of the area the buildings are but 2 rooms in depth, the ideal condition of planning. Instead of having numerous wings projecting out into the gardens, thus decreasing their size and outlook and very often their attractiveness, as has been the case with otherwise excellent Garden developments, these new apartments wisely have limited such projecting wings to 4 points of the building area, occurring only in connection with the 6-story elevator units of the scheme. The major part of the area of the building is devoted to 4-story walk-ups 2 rooms in depth and without these projecting wings. Clarence S. Stein is the architect responsible for this design.

What attractive results this type of design gives is realized when it is stated that the interior Garden-Park covers an area of 60,000 square feet or  $\frac{3}{4}$  the area of Gramercy Park. The projectors of this building very wisely planted large elm trees at the beginning of the building operations so that they might secure the benefit of growth while the building was under construction, thus avoiding when completed that raw appearance which so many projects unfortunately have. Although the buildings were opened only in September they are today 92% rented.

Among the distinctive features of this enterprise are a series of porches, both open and enclosed with occasional balconies. The equipment includes the latest conveniences and gadgets. The kitchens have inlaid linoleum on the floors and are supplied with gas refrigeration. Incinerators have been provided in locations convenient to apartment doors. Living rooms have radio outlets. Walls between abutting apart-

ments are soundproof and the roofs are cork insulated. Ample dining space in the form of dining foyers or alcoves is provided. The rooms are unusually large and are designed with reference to the proper arrangement of the furniture. Rooms for the keeping and storage of perambulators are conveniently distributed at several places in the apartment group. In addition there is a large nursery facing the interior garden with a paved outdoor terrace adjoining it. A social room is available for various clubs and social activities of the tenants.

All the rooms face wide open exposures. A majority of the living rooms and bedrooms overlook the interior Garden-Park. Opposite the building on the 50th Street front is another park and playground maintained by the Community Association under the City Housing Association. This is available to the tenants of the new buildings for sport and recreation activities at moderate rates.

All students of housing improvements will find it profitable to visit this latest model housing scheme. For those who are not familiar with its location, it may be pointed out that it is located at 50th Street (formerly Fitting Street) and 39th Avenue (formerly Middleburg) and but a 5-minute walk from the Lincoln Avenue station at Queens Boulevard of the East Side subway, the B. M. T. and the Second Avenue elevated. The Fifth Avenue bus also traverses Queens Boulevard.

## ANOTHER NEW HOUSING PROJECT

### “CELTIC PARK”—THE CITY AND SUBURBAN HOMES COMPANY

It is an interesting coincidence that three of the oldest model housing companies in New York City should all be projecting new developments at about the same time. We have already described the development of Phipps Gardens near the existing Sunnyside Development in Queens. About a half a mile away the oldest model housing corporation in the city—the City and Suburban Homes Company, established 36 years ago—acquired two whole city blocks, each 190 feet in width by 600 feet in length. In an earlier issue\* we announced the acquisition of this property and the tentative plans of the Company for its development. That was a year ago. Since then those plans have been proceeded with and the first unit of new model apartments has been completed and is now fully occupied.

The site selected by the Company is an admirable one for a development of this type. For years it had been unbuilt upon, used as an

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\* See “*Housing*”, September, 1930, pp. 167-168.



athletic and picnic ground for fraternal organizations—hence its name. It contained many large trees and afforded a splendid opportunity for the very best kind of a model housing development.

The unit which has been erected and which was made available for occupancy last September extends across the full width of the property, namely 190 feet, and for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the length of the block or a distance of 150 feet. This unit contains 116 apartments of 3, 4, and 5 rooms each with a few  $2\frac{1}{2}$ s.

Following a precedent established in recent years, partly to relieve monotony and partly to secure better architectural effect, partly also to secure larger revenues, the building is not of uniform height. Some parts of it are 4-story and other parts of it are 6 and 7 stories high. The 4-story parts are walkups. The 6 and 7 story sections are served by automatic elevators.

The buildings are not fireproof but are built under the provisions of the Multiple Dwelling Law which require the lowest story to be completely fireproof and shut off from the cellar. We think that the projectors of this enterprise have made a serious mistake in building so high as 7 stories with elevators without making their building fireproof and hope that they will not have occasion to regret their decision in this respect.

Of the 116 apartments, 12 are in the walkup section—the remaining 104 are in the 6-story and 7-story parts of the building. The entrances to all apartments are from the courts, not from the street—in this respect also following a recent trend in housing developments of this character.

The first unit occupies a little more than half of the land, 54.5%, and contains an interior court 100 feet long by 82 feet in its widest dimension; this narrows down to 35 feet at its narrowest point. It is thus seen that the development is not as “open” a one as some of the Garden Apartments that have been built in recent years. When compared with the Phipps Garden Apartments, described elsewhere in this issue, the contrast is striking.

We deplore the decision which the Company has made on this important phase of its development and think it will regret it also, as time goes on. In order to hold their own and meet the competition that is bound to come in future years from other developments, they will find their buildings in a short time regarded as somewhat antiquated—just as their buildings built 30 years ago are so regarded to-day.

It does not require any vast stretch of the imagination to realize that the “open” Garden development—which to-day is more or less

of a pioneer in the housing development of the city—will in a few years be the prevailing commercial type, found not merely in the occasional group of mass-constructed buildings projected by persons desirous of improving housing conditions, but the prevailing commercial type of the future.

We hope that the City and Suburban Homes Company in developing the rest of this property—certainly the remaining separate city block—will take these suggestions to heart and consider a development more on the lines of the Phipps Garden Apartments in its site plan than is found in their present development.

The building contains all modern conveniences. Besides automatic elevators there are also automatic refrigerators, and incinerators, ranges and “door-interviewers”, and fully equipped bathrooms and kitchens. All apartments have a cross draft and the majority of them have 3 exposures. The principle of privacy has been observed in most apartments and seems to be a feature that is appreciated by the tenants, if one can judge from the experience in renting.

The room sizes average approximately 184 square feet for living rooms, 151 square feet for bedrooms and 87 square feet for kitchens—which means that rooms are of a generous size and in conformity with the present demand and trend.

We are informed that this first building is now entirely rented with the exception of 2 apartments. This is a splendid tribute to the selling demand of these buildings, in view of the fact that they were only thrown open for occupancy last September and in view also of the period of depression that the city is going through. All apartments are rented on a minimum lease of one year, and some for 2 and 3 years. Because of the very considerable reductions in rental that accrue on a 3-year lease, 80% and over have been rented on that basis. In every case a cash deposit is required. Under a 3-year lease the monthly rental is 5% less than under a 2-year lease and for a single year about 5% more than on the 2-year basis.

Most of the apartments are of 4 rooms. The Company states that its renting experience would seem to indicate that a greater proportion of 3-room apartments would have been more in keeping with the present demand, and that the demand for apartments of that size is most pronounced.

A second operation of equal size was started about a month ago and is well under way. This adjoins the first operation and is so designed that two further similar operations will complete the development of one whole block. An interior court will be provided to con-



nect with the court of the first operation. The whole court of the entire block development when finished will be 553 feet long with a varying width, averaging about 70 feet, being 82 feet at its widest dimension and 35 feet at its narrowest.

A glance at the plans of the building shows that the architects—instead of adopting a plan similar to that adopted for Phipps Gardens and building the buildings around a hollow square with occasional wings thrown into it—have followed more closely the lines of some of the model housing schemes built a few years ago and have allowed the projecting wings to predominate to so great an extent that the interior open space loses a great deal of its value. It can no longer be said to be a park but must be treated as an interior court—a large court, it is true, but still a court.

We think that this decision was unfortunate and hope that the Company when it develops the second block will develop it along lines that will be more in keeping with the planning of the future, and provide an interior open space that is really a park and not a court. They will find that the financial returns from that kind of development are quite as good as from the type of development which has been employed in their first units.

This second unit will provide a greater number of 3-room apartments. All apartments as in the first unit will have good cross-ventilation. Similar conveniences will be furnished, including elevator service and the principal of privacy adhered to throughout. It is expected the second unit will be completed early in September.

The location of this new development of the City and Suburban Homes Company seems to have been wisely determined; for, according to a recent report issued by the Regional Plan Association it lies in almost the exact centre of population of Greater New York. That it is accessible from the business district of New York, and particularly the mid-town business district, is realized when it is known that it is within a 10-minutes walk of the Lowery Street Station on Queens Boulevard from which it is only a 12 to 15 minute ride to Grand Central or Times Square.

This development is quite obviously a white-collar development, or perhaps in view of the fact that it houses policemen, it might more appropriately be termed a “blue-collar” development.

The rentals in the first unit average about \$15 per room per month and it is expected that the same rates will obtain in the second operation. There are two stores in the first unit both of which are rented.

We are informed that the first unit was the first and so far the only building construction in the Borough of Queens in which the build-

ing is located, to be honored by the New York Building Congress which bestowed a craftsmanship award to the mechanics employed on it. Ernest Flagg, who has done so much for the improvement of housing in New York was architect of the first unit and Springsteen and Goldhammer, the architects of that splendid Amalgamated Housing Development in the Bronx, the architects of the second unit.

## BROOKLYN GARDEN APARTMENTS A SUCCESS

It is not strange that there should be these new housing projects developed in the various parts of New York City in view of the continuing success of these large-scale operations.

One of the more recent of these, and one that has been particularly successful, is the Brooklyn Garden Apartments whose first development in Brooklyn at Fourth Avenue and 23rd to 24th Streets, was opened a little less than 3 years ago, and whose second development in the Navy Yard section at Adelphi Street and Carlton Avenue was made available for tenants a little over a year ago. In a statement to the stockholders dated February 15th, Mr. Kruesi, the executive manager of the project, in transmitting the 5th semi-annual dividend to stockholders points out that the Company is very much a going concern. It is continuing to pay its stockholders, as it has from the beginning, at the rate of 6% per annum, the limit permitted by the Company's charter.

He points out that notwithstanding the Company continues to charge 14.1% of its gross income for depreciation—including the amortization of its mortgages—and notwithstanding the fact that it has reduced some of the rents, the Company in the past year increased the percentage of net gain out of gross income over the year previous. The tenants' shareholdings also increased during the period. During the year not a dollar of apartment rents that was due was lost and vacancies and interim losses were under 2½%.

These results are unquestionably due to sound management. As pointed out by the new President of the Company, D. Irving Mead, the proportionate cost of operation has been reduced as the company has grown. In other words, it has found it possible to manage two units with the same staff that was necessary for the operation of a single unit. Naturally, with the same overhead expenses distributed over a larger venture, the operating costs per unit have necessarily come down. Mr. Mead points out that it is still possible with the same overhead to enlarge the enterprise and to make the investment even better.



Rents are still low, ranging from \$8 to \$12 per room per month. As he points out, there is a great demand for good housing at such rates.

The sponsors of the Company are arranging to finance an addition to the Navy Yard project; the adjoining property 50 by 100 feet in area has been purchased and enough stock has been sold so that the Company feels that it is justified in proceeding in the near future with the construction of about 25 additional apartments.

The showing thus made must be very gratifying to the public-spirited citizens of Brooklyn, who not only have put their efforts into making this housing development possible, but have given evidences of their faith in the Cause by investing their funds in its stock.

It is to be hoped that the Company will have a long career of usefulness like its sister companies in Manhattan and will be able to expand and extend its influence from year to year as circumstances permit.

## A NOVEL NEW HOUSING PROJECT

### ERNEST FLAGG'S LATEST SCHEME

Ernest Flagg, the distinguished New York architect who has perhaps done more to clarify the subject of the design of modern housing than any other person in America, is still going strong notwithstanding his many years of activity in this field. Recently he has acquired a large plot of land in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, the old Schlegel estate on the West side of Ridge Boulevard, between 72nd and 73rd streets in South Brooklyn.

The property consists of two separate blocks, one 200 feet by 460 feet, and the other 100 feet by 140 feet. On the larger block Mr. Flagg is now developing a project of his own which promises to afford many novel features in this class of development and perhaps to set a new trend.

The first unit on this site is now under construction. When the whole plot is developed it is expected to accommodate about 552 families of which the first unit will contain half. The buildings are to be 9 stories high and are being constructed of re-inforced concrete, fire-proof throughout. Mr. Flagg contends that he is able to build these buildings cheaper by building them fireproof because of the savings in space that result from the use of lighter floors and partitions, than he could if he were to build them of ordinary construction.

The buildings are built around a central garden which ranges from 70 feet in width at its narrowest point to 125 feet at its widest part

and runs some 350 feet in length. How spacious it is may be realized when it is pointed out that it will contain a swimming pool 70 feet by 100 feet in size.

Discussing a few weeks ago the form of construction employed by him in this project, Mr. Flagg said:

I selected the Bay Ridge site because it seemed to me a beautiful spot for apartment buildings. I decided to improve the property at once because prices are low for materials. For many years I have been experimenting in cost reduction in building, and I am going to apply the methods which I have perfected in this enterprise. Among other things, I have found that the economies in space afforded by the fireproof method of construction more than offset its increased cost. This saving will, in this particular case, amount to more than one full story, so that although the cost per cubic foot is more, the cost per square foot of rentable space is considerably less.

This development known as "Flagg Court" will consist of apartments in which apartments of 3½ rooms predominate, with 4½ rooms next in number and with some apartments of 2½ rooms—the half room being the dining alcove.

Entrances to the apartments will be on the street side at convenient distances. Push-button automatic elevators will be installed. Windows will have ultra-violet ray glass and living rooms will be equipped with radio outlets.

A unique feature of this development is Mr. Flagg's wise decision to utilize the roofs of the buildings for the convenience of the tenants. Instead of as is so often the case the tenants being kept off the roof and not having access to the open sky at night and to the air in Summer and to the beneficial rays of the sun at all times, Mr. Flagg intends to use the roofs of his buildings to the maximum. The roof is to be tiled and surrounded by high ornamental grilles for safety and provided with shelters and kiosks and seats so that the tenants of the buildings can sit there and enjoy the view of the harbor, the fresh air and the sunlight.

The buildings are within three blocks of the waterfront commanding fine views of the lower Bay, the Narrows and Staten Island. The site of these apartments was formerly a show place in that section of Brooklyn, the Schlegel mansion with its green houses, flower beds, old trees and fine shrubbery with the old homestead in the centre of the plot being for many years a centre of attraction to the entire neighborhood. Mr. Flagg is wisely conserving these assets by having the trees and shrubs that were on the old place temporarily taken care of to be replanted in the new interior garden a little later, thus to be available for the continuing delight of the new tenants.



It is expected that the apartments will rent for an average of less than \$20 per room per month. The base rate is stated by Mr. Flagg to be \$20. For those tenants who rent apartments from the plans a reduction of 10% is made, and for those taking 3-year leases a further reduction of 10% is also made, which will bring the rent for persons taking advantage of these two opportunities down to \$16 per room per month. Mr. Flagg is of opinion that with the cheaper construction that he is employing in the building he will ultimately be able to rent fire-proof apartments in this district for as low as \$12 per room per month.

Naturally but one unit is being developed at a time in this rather large enterprise, as it would be obviously unwise to glut the market with new accommodations all at once in advance of the ability of the neighborhood to absorb them.

When the Flagg Court Development is completed, Mr. Flagg expects to develop the smaller site, known as the Ridge Club site, which is 100 by 140 feet in area and which when the operations are completed will contain an apartment house with accommodations for 154 additional families. The second site is not to be Mr. Flagg's personal project but a development of the New York Model Fireproof Tenement Company, of which Mr. O. G. Jennings is President and in which Mr. Flagg is interested and has been for many years. It developed the model fire-proof tenements in the West 41st street district many years ago. It is expected that the first unit will be ready for occupancy in October or shortly thereafter.

It is evident from all of this that when Mr. Flagg's pioneering development is completed the friends of large-scale housing operations will have an extraordinarily interesting opportunity to see put to the test many ideas that have been advocated in recent years.

## THE ACADEMY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

### CLASON'S POINT IN THE BRONX

Any account of recent large-scale operations in New York City which did not mention the semi-commercial development known as the Academy Housing Corporation development at Clason Point in the remoter regions of the Bronx would be singularly defective. Started about 15 months ago this project was completed last Fall and the entire 474 apartments contained in it were almost immediately occupied upon its being made available for tenancy.

This large project located in what may be termed a suburban neighborhood, though still within the city limits, is the largest project thus far erected under the State Housing Law. Situated on the site of the old Clason Point Military Academy overlooking the East River, the development consists of 8 separate buildings occupying a block of 140,000 square feet, containing apartments for 474 families and providing 755 rooms. The buildings are of brick 6 stories in height and are equipped with all modern facilities including automatic push-button elevators, electric refrigeration, incinerators, modern plumbing, private baths and the usual modern conveniences and equipment that the public to-day demand.

The buildings have a most advantageous site with attractive views of the East River from many of the apartments. One interesting feature of this development is that the buildings occupy but 44% of the land, the remainder being used for parks and playground purposes and for light courts and open spaces. The estimated total cost of the project was \$2,158,000, of which \$1,320,000 was provided by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company on a 20-year mortgage at 5%. The equity was supplied by two commercial builders who are responsible for the project, Jacob Leitner and David Rose, well-known and large operators in Bronx real estate development. The architects were Springsteen and Goldhammer, the architects of the highly successful Amalgamated development in the Bronx and on the Lower East Side.

A few facts with regard to this development are not without interest. The ceiling heights are 8 feet 6; the gross floor area per room is 210 square feet; the average area of living rooms is 187 square feet; of bedrooms 141.5 square feet; of kitchenettes 20 square feet and of kitchens and dining alcoves combined 124 square feet. The average monthly rental per room is \$11 per month. In addition to the 474 apartments there are 8 stores on the ground floor. The building is served by 16 elevators.

A study of the site plan shows a treatment that differs somewhat from any of the site plans thus far developed in large-scale operations of this kind in New York City in the fact that the 4 units on each side of the block are separated by open courts 50 feet in width. The interior garden is 63½ feet in width and runs the entire length of the block, viz., 700 feet. Contrary to many developments the interior Garden is open at both ends, thus affording a view of the gardens from both the end streets, and also giving a great deal better circulation of air and access of sunlight. We commend the architects and projectors of this site for this intelligent treatment of the ends of the block.



Each unit consists of a building of about 140 feet in width and 68 feet in depth with a large open court about 40 feet wide between the two wings of each unit. An ingenious treatment of these units has been afforded by the architects in the development of the site plan by reversing the open courts in the case of alternate pairs of units. Thus, for example, the two end units on one of the street sides contain street courts; between those two end units are two interior units separated by open spaces of 50 feet on all sides. These instead of having a street court, have courts that open to the garden. The four units on the opposite street front are treated in similar fashion.

This gives variety to the plan and difference of outlook to the apartments and should work well in practice.

For those who wish to visit this new development, it may be pointed out that the buildings are located in the Bronx in the Clason Point section on the property bounded by Commonwealth and Rosedale, Lacombe and Randall Avenues.

The chief interest that this project has for students of housing lies in the fact that it would seem to mark the beginning of a new trend, viz., the development of commercial housing projects taking advantage of the tax exemption feature of the State Housing Law and necessarily complying with the conditions imposed by that statute.

## AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT

### MAISONETTES ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

The Fred. L. Lavanburg Foundation in its experimentation in housing recently completed remodeling a tenement house on the corner of Goerck and Broome Streets. This house formerly consisted of 4-room flats and now there are 16 3-room apartments with modern improvements such as steam heat, hot water, electricity and bath. The rental ranges from \$6.75 to \$8.25 per apartment per week depending upon the location of the apartment. Little difficulty was experienced in renting the apartments with the exception of two in the rear which have poor light and cannot be disposed of even at a very low rental.

Due to the depression and the fact that there were so many vacant stores on the East Side, the Foundation was unable to rent the four stores in the building. Therefore, in view of its interest in promoting social welfare, it was decided to have two of the stores turned into game rooms. Such games as ping-pong, crockinole, checkers, dominoes and other table games were provided, and all the children of the neigh-

borhood were invited to come in. The children pay a penny an evening and judging by the attendance it is worth the price to them.

On the basis of the success of this experiment, the Lower East Side Community Council followed with another game room in a store on East Fourth Street. The response to this type of recreation has proved its desirability.

In connection with the main building of the Foundation located at 124-142 Goerck Street, it is interesting to note that it recently won tax exemption from the courts as a philanthropic housing organization. This saving will help the Foundation maintain the building, since due to unemployment many families are being carried without payment of rent.

### WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE LIVE IN MODEL HOUSING PROJECTS?

What sorts of families are taking advantage of the superior housing at low cost made possible by tax exemption, limited dividends and other benefits under the N. Y. State Housing Law? To what income groups do they predominantly belong? How far down the income scale do they reach? Are the lower income families being crowded out by families who do not really need the assistance given?

These questions are answered in detail in a Report\* recently published by the N. Y. State Board of Housing. The Report comes as a welcome addition to our none too rich recent family-budget literature and is notable as the first from a model housing project that goes into details of family expenditures.

It is to be hoped that this report is only the first of a series and that we shall eventually hear from the 1500 families in houses under the supervision of the State Board of Housing who do not belong to the Amalgamated Housing Corporation group. That it should have been possible in this case to obtain 400 usable schedules from 511 tenants—almost 80%—betokens a high degree of intelligent cooperation. Much of this initial success is due to A. E. Kazan, President of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation, and to the fine spirit he has fostered among the tenant-owners.

The success of this Report we hope will encourage the State Board of Housing to publish vital statistics of its 2000 or more families as a part of its annual reports in future—general death rates, infant mor-

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\* *The Standard of Living of 400 Families in a Model Housing Project* by Asher Achinstein, N. Y. State Board of Housing, 80 Centre Street, N. Y. City. 1931-93 pp. 58 tables.



tality rates, birth rates, and the rates for reportable sickness. Also, as it would be argued that the age distribution of its tenants was unusually favorable, general death rates standardized for age should be given, as well as crude rates.

The Garden Apartments of the Amalgamated Corporation are situated in the Bronx just south of Van Cortlandt Park and represent the highest standards yet achieved in low-cost housing in this country. The buildings cover less than half of the land, which is beautifully planted and tended. Construction was carried on from 1927 to 1929. Having built under the State Housing Law, the co-operators enjoy a 20-year tax exemption on the buildings, enabling them to amortize enough of their mortgage to be able to continue paying, after the expiration of the tax exemption period, as now, an average rental of \$11 per room per month. Most of the apartments are of 3 or 4 rooms and bath, though a reasonable number have 5 rooms and a few 6. Limitation of rents, limitation of dividends and exceedingly high requirements as to standards are exacted by the State Board of Housing in return for tax exemption and other benefits enjoyed.

Ownership in this case is cooperative, the cooperators contributing one-third of the capital in the form of stock subscriptions, the other two-thirds being furnished by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company on first mortgage security at 5%. Each cooperator's contribution came to about \$500 per room in his apartment—\$1500 for a 3-room apartment or \$2000 for a 4-room one. As very few of them had sufficient savings to pay cash for their stock, most of them borrowed from the Amalgamated Credit Union, giving notes which they are still occupied in paying off. This is one of the points it would have been instructive to know more about—how many of them had incurred debts and of what size in this connection?

The initiators of this development were a group of workers belonging to the clothing industry, members of a powerful labor union—the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. They have given name and leadership to the project. Only 30.6% of the families living in these buildings are members of this group, however. Professional service comes next with 10.1%, building trade mechanics with 8.3%, shop keepers and jobbers 8.1%, followed by salesmen, clerks, printing trades, millinery trades and a scattering list of others. The bond of union is religious and racial rather than occupational. The group is Jewish and predominantly foreign born. Roughly, 60% of husbands and wives were born in Russia, 11% in Poland, and 10½% in Austria.

Over seventy per cent (70%+) of tenant owners are between the ages of 30 and 50. The average number of persons per family is 3.74—substantially below the average for the population at large. This is as one would expect. Those with numerous children would not be able to save enough to make their stock purchases. There are 66 families consisting of but 2 persons, 98 of 3 and 144 of 4, making together 77% of the total.

As to income, we have the chief breadwinner's annual earnings, weekly earnings when fully employed, and amount of unemployment. And we have welcome data concerning the source and amount of supplementary income. The average income of the chief breadwinner for the year 1930 was \$2275.28, or \$43.75 per week. One-fifth ( $1/5$ ) of them receive less than \$1500, nearly two-fifths ( $2/5$ ) earn less than \$2000, 64.1% less than \$2500, 78.9% less than \$3000. Only 2% received above \$4500. For a little over three-fifths ( $3/5$ ) of the families the chief breadwinner was the only source of income. Wives in 27 cases, and children in 124, contributed to the family support; but their earnings, together with money from boarders, investments and gifts, only accounted for 13.2% of total family income, which averaged \$2621.31. More than one-tenth ( $1/10$ ) of family incomes were under \$1500, more than a fourth (26.6%) under \$2000, 51% under \$2500, and 69.2% under \$3000. Only 4.3% had more than \$4500.

In other words, these apartments do seem to be occupied in the main by the class of families for whom they were intended—skilled labor, office workers and small shop keepers. As might have been foreseen, they are beyond the reach of unskilled labor and of families with large numbers of children.

It is pleasing to find the index of room density chronicled. It is given in terms of the average number of rooms per person instead of the more familiar persons per room. Persons and rooms very nearly equal each other where the households are composed of 3 or 4 members. There is more than 1 room per person for households of 2, and an average of substantially less than 1 room per person for families of 5 or over. It amounts to about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  persons per room for families of 6, 7 or 8, of whom 25 reported.

The average amount of rent paid by all 511 families was \$518.52 per year or \$43.21 per month, including heat. The rent bills of 400 families average 18.4% of their total annual expenditure. Over two-fifths (40%) of all the families spent 20% or more of their budgets for rent. This, however, is not all of the story; for comparatively few of

them had finished paying for their stock, and the extent of the burden entailed by this ought to form part of the record.

In addition to rent, family expenditures are classed under food, clothing, house operation (gas, electricity, telephone, laundry and the like) and "all others". Food expenditures, which average 33% of the total, vary from 25.6% to 37.2%—the larger proportions being for the smaller incomes. So also with rent, which climbs as high as 25% of income at the bottom, sinking to 11.6% of incomes of \$5000 and over. House operation does not greatly vary, shifting between 6 and 8% of income without much reference to its size. Clothing expenditures increase, proportionately as well as absolutely, with income—from 7.7% at the bottom to 14.3% at the top, with an average of 10.7%. The miscellaneous expenditures—including health, education, recreation and savings—naturally increase with income.

In comparison with other budget studies, food and clothing expenditures seem low and "all others" high. This is accounted for in the case of food partly by the small average size of families and partly by the economies realized through purchasing at their own cooperative stores. Small size of families may have had some influence on clothing expenditures, but I am inclined to believe this is a point on which these cooperative home purchasers tend to economize.

They seek their satisfactions elsewhere. And measured by satisfactions, it must be agreed that they have attained an exceptionally high standard of living. Moreover, it is a standard to which they could not have attained without the assistance given by the State Board of Housing under the state law, and their own cooperative spirit under the leadership of their President.

EDITH ELMER WOOD

Cape May Court House, N. J.

## MAINTENANCE COSTS IN LARGE-SCALE HOUSING PROJECTS

The New York State Board of Housing has rendered a valuable service in presenting in its 1931 Report\* the results of an inquiry among 9 of the leading large-scale model housing companies in New York City that own and operate model dwellings for families with relatively small incomes, as to the cost of maintaining their properties.

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\* *Apply to State Board of Housing, 80 Centre St., N. Y. C.*



These 9 corporations control 150 buildings which differ in size, age and the facilities supplied to the tenants. Some are walkup structures that vary from 3 to 6 stories in height and others are 6-story elevator buildings. Several of the comparatively old dwellings are not provided with bathrooms for every apartment. A few of the recent housing developments contain playgrounds and gardens.

While any comparison of maintenance costs in projects built at different times and which furnish such different kinds of accommodations are not without their elements of difficulty for which allowance must be made in any comparative study, there are sufficient basic facts in connection with all of these enterprises to make it possible to produce statistics which should serve as a reasonable yardstick in future housing developments of this kind. One of the difficulties that every group that has sought to launch a large-scale housing project has met with, has been the absence of any figures that would aid them in determining what their chances of success were likely to be. There have not been unit costs of such buildings on a room basis. The cubic foot basis has always proved dangerous and unsatisfactory. And, particularly, there have been no yardsticks with regard to maintenance costs.

Thanks to the State Board of Housing and to the co-operation of these model housing companies which have, at considerable trouble we feel sure, provided the information desired, the projectors of future large-scale operations will no longer be handicapped in this way, but will be able to have a pretty clear idea in mind before they start their project as to what the cost of maintaining their building is likely to be—not merely the cost per project or per front foot, but unit costs per room and per apartment.

These costs are presented by the State Housing Board in a table giving comparative costs through a 6-year period, from 1930 back to 1925 inclusive. The 9 multiple housing companies are represented by letters of the alphabet, thus preserving the privacy of each company's records and making it possible for persons with a legitimate interest to obtain from the State Housing Board with the consent of the company involved the name of each company where there is a proper reason for its being disclosed.

While the schedule that was filled out included data concerning the type of building and its construction, the date of completion, the cubage, the area, the coverage of land and the number of apartments, rooms and bathrooms, this information has not been published, as it could not very well be published without divulging the name of the corporation responsible for a given project.

The total maintenance costs include the following items: fuel, water, light, power to run elevators, and all other power, building repairs exclusive of capital account, elevator repairs exclusive of capital account, redecorating, supplies, wages and salaries.

All the tables are classified by the corporation and by the project. Together they represent some 7,562 apartments with a total of 26,463 rooms. The corporations are represented by letters and the buildings or groups of buildings controlled by each corporation are indicated by numerals. Cross references with regard to specific items and costs can thus be made for the same company and project.

The tables are divided into two sections—Companies “A to F” and Companies “G to I”. In the first section are included projects which were completed during and after the year 1925. The buildings in the second division were constructed earlier.

Concerning the more recent projects, it is interesting to note that the average gross floor area per room of companies A to D is less than 200 feet. The room sizes of companies E and F are more than 250 square feet. With the exception of project 2 of Company E and the dwellings of corporation F, all of the buildings in both sections are “walkup” structures.

One table gives the annual maintenance cost per room, exclusive of the cost of administration and management, of these 9 different corporations. A study of the table reveals no definite upward or downward trend in such costs; variations from year to year seem to be the rule.

When all of the items regardless of the year are thrown into a frequency table to determine the extent of variation, it is found that 24 out of 84 cases come within a range for annual maintenance cost of \$25 to \$30 per room, and 30 cases show maintenance costs at between \$30 and \$35 per room. When the cost of any particular project for any particular year falls markedly out of line with other years it is usually the result of considerable changes either in the expense of redecorating or the cost of building repairs.

A second table gives the annual maintenance cost per room when the expense for administration is included. A further table gives the fuel costs of the different projects, on a cost per room basis. The Report commenting on this says that next to wages, this is probably the largest item of maintenance expense. The companies in the first section, viz., those built since 1925, seem to have higher fuel costs than those in the second division, or those built prior to 1925.

When all of the items are grouped into frequency tables it is found that 20 out of 84 cases fall within a range of \$4 to \$6 annual fuel cost per room; and 20 fall within a range of \$8 to \$10 per room. The more frequent class is that between \$6 and \$8 which has 28 cases.

Further tables give the annual cost of wages per room which is the largest item of maintenance expense. Commenting on these tables, the Report calls attention to the fact that there is a slight upward trend in the cost of wages per room in several of the projects, some of these showing this trend since 1925. If all items are classified regardless of the year to determine the range of the wage bill, it is found that 30 out of 84 cases fall within the range of \$6 to \$8 per room and 21 between \$10 and \$12 per room. It is added that the cost of wages per room is relatively lower for companies having the largest number of rooms.

Further tables give the cost of Building Repairs and Supplies and Redecorating, and still further tables give the cost of Administration and Management, the cost of Light and Power and Water—all on a room basis.

## FACTORS AFFECTING RENT

Further helpful facts are presented in this Report of the State Housing Board with regard to the factors that enter into the question of rent in modern large-scale housing projects.

The Report has sought to present these facts in the form of a number of tables in the belief that they will be of help to people who may be contemplating engaging in such projects in future under the terms of the State Housing Law.

As the Report very aptly points out, whether a return of 6% on the investment is possible at monthly rentals per room that are not to exceed an average of \$12.50 in Manhattan or \$11 elsewhere in the State depends upon a number of factors. These factors the Report states are the price of land, the rate of interest and amortization, the unit cost of construction, the number and size of rooms, the land coverage, the height of the buildings and possible revenue from stores.

The Board states that its experience with projects that have been both approved and disapproved indicates that tables assuming the construction of non-fireproof, 6-story elevator buildings, at costs ranging from 38¢ to 44¢ per cubic foot, with land coverages of 50% and 60% would be the most typical and serviceable to present.

On this basis the Board offers the following financial setup based upon the Board's experience:



1. The rate of interest on the mortgage, which is approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the total cost of the project, is 5%.
2. The rate of amortization of the mortgage is 3%.
3. The rate of dividends on the equity, which is approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total cost of the project, is 6%.
4. The rate of taxes on land is 2.75.
5. The cost of maintenance is figured at \$45 a room per annum.

With these underlying conditions used to estimate the various rents that are likely to be obtained, the Report presents the facts with regard to such monthly rents in 9 different tables, all of which give the monthly rent per room in 6-story elevator buildings with varying room sizes and erected on land of different prices.

The first 4 of these tables are based upon a 50% coverage of the land by buildings, with construction costs at 38¢, 40¢, 42¢ and 44¢ per cubic foot, respectively. Under these four separate conditions facts are presented to show with land costs per square foot varying from \$1 to \$12 and room sizes varying from 150 to 250 square feet by 25 square foot variations—that is, five separate groups—what the estimated monthly rent is that can be expected under these varying circumstances.

Four similar tables present similar facts with the same costs per cubic foot but with 60% coverage of the land instead of 50%, and a final table deals with the Effect of Store Values on Rent, showing the decrease in the monthly rent per room with rooms of these 5 different sizes resulting from each \$250 per lot of income from stores. This is shown for developments where there is 50% coverage and 60% coverage of the land.

The State Board of Housing has rendered an extremely useful public service in presenting these yardsticks for the guidance of persons proposing large-scale operations not only in New York City but in other large cities of the country.

## STRIKING RESULTS UNDER THE NEW YORK TENEMENT LAWS

When Lawrence Veiller organized the New York Tenement House Department over 30 years ago, he set up a scheme of ascertaining and reporting upon the facts connected with housing that has proved of great value to the community ever since. This has been borne in upon the public recently by a Report of that Department made public a few weeks ago.

This Report showed that at the end of the year 1931 by actual count there were 121,036 multiple dwellings in the city (buildings occupied by 3 families or more). Of this number, 36,245 were found to be in Manhattan, 16,062 in the Bronx, 58,095 in Brooklyn, 10,284 in Queens and 350 in Richmond. The total number of apartments in these buildings was found to be 1,414,392.

Interesting facts are presented in this survey with regard to the number of apartments in the different kinds of houses. Such apartments in old-law tenements in Manhattan were 276,384; in Brooklyn 74,702; in the Bronx 31,332 and in Richmond 1195—a total in the Greater City\* of 383,613. In the new-law tenements there were in Manhattan 198,766 apartments; in Brooklyn 132,346; in the Bronx 262,313; and in Richmond 1051—a total of 594,476 apartments.

It is thus seen that the number of families—and therefore the number of people—living under these conditions to-day exceeds by 55% the number living under the discredited and unsatisfactory conditions that prevailed universally in the city prior to the enactment of the de Forest-Veiller Tenement House Law 30 years ago.

How wide-spread in its effect and how controlling can be the operation of intelligent, regulatory legislation becomes apparent.

The significance of these figures is great. It means that under the operation of the Tenement House Law—controlling and regulating the types of buildings that may be constructed in New York City, laying down the minimum requirements of light, ventilation and sanitation—a majority of the people of the city are now, after a period of 30 years, living under conditions that insure a reasonable amount of light, ventilation, fire-safety, comfort, privacy and convenience of living.

The facts with regard to vacancies are not only of great interest to the projectors of model housing projects but also to the realtors of the city. The Department survey showed that vacancies in old-law tenements, viz., those built prior to 1901, had increased from 8.6% to 16.2% in the last 4 years. Notwithstanding the depression, the vacancies in new-law tenements were only 9.4% in 1931 as compared to 9.3% in 1928. The largest number of vacancies were found in old-law tenements in the Borough of Manhattan, where 49,652 apartments, or 17.9% of the available rental living accommodations, were found to be vacant; in Brooklyn 9714 or 13%; in the Bronx 2726 or 8.7%; in Richmond 206 or 17.2%—the total vacancies in old-law tenements amounting to 62,298.

That the vacancies in new-law tenements were very much less is naturally to have been expected and is a tribute to the superior accom-

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\* These figures do not include the Borough of Queens.

modations furnished by that law. In Manhattan the number of vacant apartments in that class of houses was found to be 21,404 or 10.7%—very different from the 18% in old-law tenements; in Brooklyn 8071 or 6.1%; in the Bronx 26,408 or 10.1%; in Richmond 223 or 21.2%—with a total of 56,106 vacant apartments in new-law buildings.

The Report in question contains other interesting facts with regard to the number of new buildings constructed during the year and the accommodations supplied by them. All students of housing will find it advantageous to obtain a copy of this Report. It can be had upon application to the Tenement House Department of the City of New York at the Municipal Building in that city.

## LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS AND THE DEPRESSION

Students of improved housing have often said that these mass housing developments on a large scale were all right in prosperous times but that when bad times struck the country things would be very different and they would greatly suffer and would be among the first to feel the depression and would have an unusual number of vacancies and uncollectible bad debts—a situation not provided for in their amortization plans and financial scheme of things.

Thinking that it would be profitable to test out this belief, this Journal last October addressed an inquiry to the Managers of some of the leading recent large-scale housing projects in New York City asking them the following questions:

How many vacancies had you on October 1st, 1931, as compared with October 1st, 1929 and 1930; and how has the financial situation affected your revenues?

Has a class of people ordinarily higher in the social scale moved into your buildings since the depression? To what extent?

What has been your loss from "bad debts" as compared with more normal times?

We know our readers will be greatly interested in the replies to this inquiry which were received last October from a number of the leading model housing projects in New York. These included the Amalgamated Housing Development in the Bronx, The Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments for Negroes in Harlem, the Brooklyn Garden Apartments in Brooklyn, The City Housing Development at Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, various developments of the City and Suburban Homes Company, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's buildings in Queens, the Phipps houses both on the East side and West side of Manhattan, as well as the new Phipps Garden Development in Queens and the Fred. L. Lavanburg Homes on the Lower East Side,



and in Chicago the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments for Negroes, the Julius Rosenwald development.

#### THE AMALGAMATED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE BRONX

A. E. Kazan, President of this Company writes as follows:

Whether we are more fortunate than others or not, I cannot say; but possibly due to the fact that ours is a cooperative enterprise we have so far not felt to any extent the effect of the economic depression.

On October 1st, 1931 we had 2 vacancies. On October 1st, 1930, we were fully rented. On October 1st, 1929 we had about 35 vacancies due to the fact that one of our buildings was just completed.

Since the depression there has been no material change in the personnel of our tenants.

The only difference noticeable as compared with our previous years is that our rent receivable has increased by about \$3000. Our record so far has been that we have not lost any rent on account of being uncollectible. During this great unemployment it may mean that we may have to carry some of our people that are out of work for several months, but since this money is fully guaranteed by the investment every tenant owns in the building it is only fair that we should pursue this policy.

#### THE PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR APARTMENTS

Roscoe C. Bruce, the Resident Manager of the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments for Negroes writes:

At the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments—a 100% cooperative—the number of apartments from which the Corporation was receiving no revenue October 1, 1929 was zero. The same thing was true October 1, 1930. But October 1, 1931, out of 511 apartments there were 15 which were yielding no revenue.

This contrast is undoubtedly due to widespread unemployment in Harlem brought on by the general depression. The apartments which are vacant are those with the higher rentals and in particular 5 and 6-room apartments.

Because of the depression the tenant-owner turn-over which was only 4% in the first 12 months of operation has become larger. But probably more rather than less care is being exercised by the management in selecting applicants. However, it is not a fact that persons ordinarily higher in the social scale are being admitted now in contrast with previous experience. It is probable that the median wage per month, which was \$148.86 for the first batch of tenant-owners, is somewhat less today—a circumstance making it necessary for every member of the family group who is old enough to work to do so. Our vocational guidance and placement services have proved to be helpful.

Under our system bad debts do not occur. Probably the management has been a little more exacting than heretofore, because it recognizes the increasing tendency to delay making payments upon the due dates.

As contrasted with commercial housing projects a cooperative even with so small a down payment as \$50 per room has a very great advantage in the circumstance that the accumulated savings of any tenant-owner at any particular time—especially after the first 2 or 3 years—afford a margin of safety in cases where payments are a month or more in arrears.

In this connection the fact that each year the tenant-owner has a greater stake than even before in the project tends to reduce the turn-over to the minimum.

### THE BROOKLYN GARDEN APARTMENTS

Walter Kruesi, Secretary-Treasurer and executive manager of the Brooklyn Garden Apartments reports:

On October 1st, 1929 when our first buildings had been open for just 2 months, we had 4 out of 164 apartments vacant. These were 3 of 5 rooms and bath, and one of 4½ rooms and bath.

On October 1st, 1930, we had our new 111 apartment building open for just a month and there were 9 vacancies of which 6 were 5-rooms and 3 were 4½ rooms.

On the first of October, 1931, out of the 275 apartments there were 7 vacant, but also 2 to be occupied in the middle of the month and 1 to be occupied in the last week of the month. Of these 7, 5 were of 5 rooms, one of 4½ and one of 3 rooms.

We have reduced the rental on the 5-room apartments. The weather has quite a lot to do with vacancies this time of the year as there are many people who will give up their apartments in fair weather and camp out somewhere or live in a cold water apartment. Of course, we never take a tenant back who once quits but we have found by the manager's statement that an increasing number of persons who are interested in our apartments have come down the scale from much better living. It was our purpose, of course, to improve the conditions of the tenant so we give the preference to those coming up the scale if we judge they can pay the rent.

As for the statement you allude to in your first paragraph it does not apply to us or in my judgment in any housing plan which is soundly set up. We reckoned on 3% for the vacancies and have not had this many on the average. We reckoned on 3% on the total investment for depreciation and amortization reserves and we also set up reserves for cumulative repairs and renewal over and above the constant maintenance.

Our financial statement shows the accumulation of considerable reserves before the payment of our 6% dividends and if it were true that we should suffer an excessive number of vacancies, we would, I believe, still be in a better position than most owners of housing for the poor.

We have operated for only a few months during what one might call good times but our loss from bad debts has been less than ¼ of 1%, and this the auditor states is entirely from the stores which occupy one of the street fronts in one of our buildings.

## SUNNYSIDE GARDENS

Herbert Emmerich, Vice-president of the City Housing Corporation, reports as follows with regard to the Sunnyside Gardens development of that Corporation:

Sunnyside Gardens on October 1st, 1931, had about 15 vacancies out of 350 apartments. As we practically never had any vacancies previously, this was rather a new situation. It is too early to tell how this has affected our revenues. Although we have installed improvements which will increase our apartment costs, such as "Electrolux" refrigeration, we have not thus far reduced rents. It is quite possible that well before the end of the year all the present vacant apartments will be rented and we expect that we will lose only 1 or 2 months' rent at the most on these vacancies. All of these vacancies cannot be attributed to the depression. There has been an extraordinary amount of speculative building in the Sunnyside vicinity at the new low costs of construction, which produced a numerous amount of low-priced apartments to rent this October. In addition, the big Phipps Garden Apartments were offered this fall with the most modern improvements at very low rents. We attribute this slower renting in our own buildings as much to the overproduction in that area in this particular year as we do to the prevailing poor business conditions.

We cannot yet give definitive answer to the question as to whether people of a character ordinarily higher in the social scale have moved into our buildings since the depression. We have an impression from our applications that there is an increasing number of such cases but we have always found at Sunnyside that we did secure a sprinkling of "intelligentsia" because of the character of the community, who would not have considered the ordinary speculative development in Queens.

We will not be able to tell until the end of the year what our loss from "bad debts" has been compared to normal times as we are still in the process of collecting a lot of debts due us. We consider that until now, in view of prevailing unemployment and salary reduction, our collections have been remarkably good. However, we are experiencing a greater number of arrears and defaults than we have previously felt. To date, however, the percentage has not seriously affected our income.

## THE CITY AND SUBURBAN HOMES CO.

C. H. Holmes, President of the City and Suburban Homes Company—one of the oldest enterprises of this kind and one with, perhaps, the largest investment in such buildings in New York City—reports that the increases in vacancies and in bad debts in their buildings are immaterial, that their vacancies as of October 1st, 1931, in all their different buildings were 50 or 1.51%, as compared with 27 or 0.83% the year before, and 30 or 1.18% in 1929. That their losses from "bad debts" (arrears loss) was in 1931  $\frac{34}{100}$  of 1%; the year before it was  $\frac{23}{100}$  of 1%; the year before that  $\frac{19}{100}$  of 1% and in 1928 was  $\frac{14}{100}$  of 1%.



His renting superintendent reports that there has been no change of note in the type of persons applying for apartments in the company's buildings.

Notwithstanding the depression, it is interesting and significant to note that the Company's new Celtic Park Development in Queens was practically 90% rented almost immediately upon its being thrown open for occupancy.

#### PHIPPS HOUSES

E. Schofield, the Executive Officer of Phipps Houses reports with regard to 3 of their developments—that in East 31st Street in Manhattan, the one for colored people in West 63rd Street and 64th Street, Manhattan, and the new Phipps Garden Apartments in the Borough of Queens, only ready for occupancy on October 1st, 19 days prior to his report.

With regard to the East 31st Street property, which contains 142 apartments, he reports as follows:

#### 325-335 EAST 31ST STREET

We had no vacancies on October 1, 1931, and the condition was the same the year previous. In fact, we have had no problem of vacancies since the house was erected in 1905. We have always endeavored to house the best class of people whom we could attract to the neighborhood. The other buildings in the neighborhood are much lower in quality than our buildings; and while we had at first anticipated that the neighborhood would improve, there has been practically no important dwelling erected anywhere in the district. Our room sizes are quite small and the ceiling heights are about 9 ft. 3 inches and the building is solid fire proof construction. We have not yet had to install automatic refrigeration nor a lot of the modern fixtures. The building is 6 stories without elevators and there has been no appreciable resistance to the renting of the top stories. We have had no loss at all from bad debts. Our rentals average \$12 a room per month.

With regard to the buildings in West 63rd and West 64th Street for Negroes, he reports as follows:

#### 243-247 WEST 63RD STREET—234-248 WEST 64TH STREET,

#### 350 APARTMENTS FOR COLORED PEOPLE

We had no vacancies on October 1, 1931 nor a year ago and there has been no problem of vacancies in many years. This building was erected in 1906 and for the first few years there were some vacancies, but since the influx of Negro people from the South during and after 1910 the houses have remained filled. For the past few years we have had about 2% loss on account of unpaid rent. Quite a number of tenants have moved out owing us money. Most of this has been due

to unemployment and we believe this is because of the fact that the Negro is a marginal worker. Many of our tenants who are domestic workers have suffered because their employers were hard hit by the financial depression. We are now carrying on our books quite a lot of delinquencies—practically 2%. Our rentals average \$9.50 a room per month.

Probably the most striking illustration of large-scale operations and the place they hold in the community is what happened with regard to the new Phipps Garden Apartments in Long Island City opened less than 3 weeks prior to the report.

With regard to these Mr. Schofield says:

#### PHIPPS GARDEN APARTMENTS—342 APARTMENTS

These apartments were completed for occupancy on October 1, 1931, and while we have had no experiences that would enable us to answer all your inquiries, the following facts may be interesting. We have rented 91% of our apartments. This was accomplished without any advertising. Except for the past month we have done a very little through the classified columns. We require security amounting to about one month's rent on which we allow 4% interest. Our tenants are all investigated very carefully and we have a scale of rentals so set as to encourage 3-year leases. In fact, 80% of the tenants have signed for a 3-year period. We have found that about 50% of the tenants have come from higher class apartments and the other 50% were paying lower rent than our scale. In estimating our rentals we figured on a vacancy of 5%. We think that this will be very adequate in the long run, but at the present time a 10% allowance would be better suited to the conditions. Our rentals average \$16.75 a room per month.

#### THE METROPOLITAN LIFE'S BUILDINGS

W. S. Norton, Comptroller of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, reports with regard to that great corporation's housing development in Long Island City the following facts:

The vacancies in the houses owned by this company in Long Island City and renting for \$9 per room per month, as of October 1, 1929 and 1930 showed very little difference; and this is due to the fact that we have a waiting list for apartments and vacancies are usually filled as fast as they occur. I have not the exact figures as of October 1st for the years mentioned, but on November 1, 1931, we had had 3 vacancies in the 2-room apartments; 15 vacancies in the 3-room apartments; 105 vacancies in the 3-room and pullman apartments; 269 vacancies in the 4-room and pullman apartments; and 114 vacancies in the 5-room; and 6 vacancies in the 6-room apartments. These vacancies were, in all probability, for not more than a few days or two weeks at the most. We rent on a month to month basis and never have any trouble in obtaining tenants from our waiting list almost immediately after an apartment is vacated.

The vacancies for the year 1929 totalled about 445 and for the year 1930 about 489 as compared with 505, the total for the period from January 1st to November 1, 1931. We figure the percentage of occupancy so far this year at about 98%. As explained before, the difference being largely due to delays necessary in preparing apartments vacated for people on the waiting list to move into. We probably have a waiting list of 2000 or more.

### ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

Abraham Goldfeld, Supervisor of the Fred L. Lavanburg Homes which is on a quasi-philanthropic basis, reports with regard to their buildings as follows:

On October 1st, 1931, we had no vacancies—the same as on October 1st, 1930. We, however, had 6 changes in tenancy from June to September 1931—a total of 18 out of 110 tenants since 1927. These apartments were all taken by families who filed applications with us some time ago.

The depression has only affected us to the extent that on October 1st, 1931, we had 18 families owing for a total of 110 weeks, as compared with 14 families owing for 49 weeks on October 1st, 1930. We expect, however, to collect all the money outstanding, since these families have been living with us for 4 years and in the past paid their rent regularly.

### IN CHICAGO

Out in Chicago the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments have had similar experiences. Alfred K. Stern, the Vice-president of the Corporation and the head of the Rosenwald Fund, writes as follows with reference to it:

The Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments were not fully in operation until the fall of 1929. As regards vacancies, the average for the year from October 1, 1929 to October 1, 1930 was 2.5%; and for the year ending October 1, 1931 it was 6.5%. Naturally, dealing with the Negro group who are hardest hit of any we expected to have more vacancies during the last year of the depression. We think the record is remarkably good in view of the fact that we have not made any general cut in our rents since the building was opened.

With regard to the class of people, we find that a better class has moved into the building during the depression. Many of them who have owned their own homes or who have lived in more expensive apartments have come to realize the advantages of living in our building—particularly on the economic side.

Our loss from bad debts has also increased but not to any alarming degree. During the year 1930 it was 1.2%. For this year we believe it will run about 1.5%.

We opened the building at the beginning of the depression and have had to operate under this tremendous handicap for the past two



years. In spite of that, we have shown a return of about 5% on the entire capital investment earned in 1930 after taxes and all other operating charges have been deducted. The 1931 earnings will be only slightly reduced.

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It would be hard to imagine more gratifying testimony to the value as an investment of large-scale modern low-cost housing developments than is afforded by this remarkable experience during the country's period of industrial depression.

### HOUSING SHORTAGE AND SLUM CONDITIONS IN GERMANY\*

American visitors to Germany see the extensive new housing developments in the outskirts of her cities,—modern Garden Apartments with the sun streaming into their windows and their outlook on green lawns, flower beds and wading pools. They talk to the rosy cheeked, bright eyed children who live there, learn something about the house rent tax and the activities of the municipal housing offices, and are impressed by the high standard of living of the German working classes. But that is only one side of the picture.

This volume issued by the German national housing organization shows the other side. It is important to keep both in mind. This is one of the most effective presentments on a nation-wide scale of bad housing and over-crowding and their physical and moral effects that has been made anywhere. The cumulative impression of this combination of generalised statistics with individual case histories is overwhelming. It should furnish ample ammunition in the German war for better housing.

The 1918 Report of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland may be a bit more thorough, but is hardly as interesting, and it represents 5 years' work on the part of an adequately financed government Commission. Moreover it dealt with a small country and a population only one twelfth that of Germany.

In America we not only lack such a report as either of these, but it would be impossible to prepare one, because we have no basic housing statistics. And we shall get no housing statistics until those who control our Census Bureau get new light on the relative importance of

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\* *Die Wohnungsnot und das Wohnungselend in Deutschland*, by Bruno Schwan, executive director of the German Association for Housing Reform—*Deutsche Verein für Wohnungsreform*—pp. 387. profusely illustrated. Carl Heyman, Berlin, 5 marks. May be ordered through the International Housing Association, 27 Hansa-Allee, Frankfurt a/Main.

human beings and commercial profits. A 5 years' campaign to get the number of rooms per family included on the population schedule of our 1930 census resulted in last-minute failure. The precious space and money which might have recorded that vital fact were used instead to find out whether the family owned a radio. The Germans have had this room density information about their big cities since 1888, and the smaller cities have been gradually added. Their last housing census in 1927 covered all communes of 5000 inhabitants and over, or 53.7% of the population. But as a large number of smaller communes came in voluntarily, figures were actually obtained for 68.7% of the population.

A valuable feature of the book before us is the silent witness of some 300 illustrations from photographs portraying to the eye the housing conditions which are described in the text.

The Report falls logically into three parts. The first, consisting of three chapters (44 pages), is a résumé from statistical and other official sources. It deals with the results of the housing census already referred to, with reports of city health officers, visiting nurses, anti-tuberculosis organizations and the like. Very striking are the figures concerning tuberculosis patients and the impossibility of their getting a room alone, or even a bed alone, in congested homes. In Cologne approximately one third of all tuberculosis patients with open lesions have to share their bedrooms with other members of the family and about half that number share their bed. Similar figures are presented for Berlin. The municipal housing bureaus, with their long lists of applicants for apartments, find two classes of families especially difficult to provide for in privately owned houses,—families where tuberculosis exists and families with more than four children,—*kinderreichen Familien*, as the kindly phrase goes. Neither class is popular with landlords. Yet the special need of both for good environment is obvious. Chapter headings are (I) The Extent of the Housing Shortage, (II) Dangers to Health in Bad Housing, and (III) Present Day Housing Conditions in Germany as the result of Historical Developments.

More than two thirds of the bulk of the book (270 pages) is in the appendix and consists of condensed official reports from 150 German communities, large and small, ranging from Berlin down to villages of 2000 and 3000, and representing all sections of the country. Each one tells the extent of its numerical housing shortage, the number of families who have had to double up because of the lack of vacancies, the number accommodated in barracks, freight cars, shacks or other emergency shelter, the number of overcrowded dwellings, the number

of insanitary or structurally unsafe dwellings, which cannot be demolished until there is something to take their place, the number of cellar dwellings—which seems to be a wide-spread evil—and the number of attic dwellings, which the steep roofs of old houses make particularly prevalent in Germany.

Between Herr Schwan's introductory chapters and this mass of official documentation lies Chapter IV by Herr Victor Noack—the 63-page record of 4 inspection trips made by a committee of the German Association for Housing Reform to check by sample the reports from a few of the 150 communes, recording case histories of the houses and families they visited. It is this part of the book that contains the most explicit human interest stories.

These journeys took the committee to the coal mining district of Lower Silesia (Waldenburg) in the South East, to the Moselle region in the West near the Luxemburg border, and to the mountains of Saxony in the South (Erzgebirge). The final study was made in Berlin. Overcrowding was everywhere. Dilapidation and insanitary conditions were general. But each region had characteristics of its own. The housing shortage in the coal country had led to frightful overcrowding. Fourteen (14) persons, including 4 married couples, were found living in 2 small rooms, parents, children, sons- and daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. Yet all was neat, clean and orderly. There was a family of 8 living in 1 room and a family of 9 in 1 cellar room. Seven (7) persons in 1 room is recorded over and over. These miners are earning fair wages and would gladly pay for better housing if it were procurable. One gets the impression of almost superhuman struggles to achieve neatness, order, bodily health and normal family life in spite of all the obstacles—of a superior population fighting desperately against unfavorable environment.

On the other hand, the picture presented against the beautiful scenic background of the Saxon mountains is one of such profound and wide-spread social and moral degradation that one wonders whether it can possibly be the result even of generations of bad housing, and whether we may not be in the presence of a mentally subnormal stock, comparable to that of our New Jersey pine barrens—a people for whom sterilization would be the logical treatment? One doubts if modern housing would help them much.

In the Moselle country, housing shortage and dilapidation affect a stratum of the population with extremely low earning power. Broom making is their chief industry. Peddlers are mentioned and a professional beggar. Sanitary habits, as in parts of our own hinterland,



are extremely primitive. Abject poverty would seem to be the primary trouble—with abject ignorance next.

Berlin, chosen for the fourth sampling, suffers from cellar dwellings, rear houses, tall tenements, small courts, insufficient light and air in the rooms opening on them, insufficiency of toilets (one to every three families is the average in some districts), and great overcrowding. Cases are recorded of 10 persons living on 13 to 15 square meters of floor space. Those who register with the authorities for an apartment wait an average of 6 years before their turn is reached. Beer cellars, cow stalls, sheds and windowless store rooms are being occupied as dwellings.

Reverting to the 1927 housing census, Germany had at that time over a million families without a separate home of their own. Not all, however, desired one. Newly married couples without children may prefer to live with parents. Aged parents may prefer to live with married children. Extreme poverty would make it impossible for some families to pay for more space. The Ministry of Labor estimated the effective demand for new apartments at 750,000. Since that time, the huge building programmes of the Cooperative Societies and public authorities have reduced this figure, the Report estimates, to about 600,000. It would be less by now, but the need is still undoubtedly very great. In addition to the physical shortage, there are hundreds of thousands of families living in worn-out habitations which ought to be demolished, but cannot be until the shortage is overcome. All together it is figured that five million people are being seriously damaged, physically and morally, by bad housing. One can sympathize with the German slogan, "The last mark for housing".

The German housing problem is an old one and a serious one, dating from long before the war. Germany has never provided the bulk of her working classes with enough space for health or for a wholesome family life. She became an industrial nation rather suddenly during the second half of the nineteenth century. The rural population poured into the cities and towns. Such housing as was available was in old houses, often centuries old, very picturesque from the street, very insanitary inside. Private business enterprise, under the pressure of supply and demand, provided the necessary new housing, quite as with us. The public authorities took no part except by establishing building and health codes and were rather slow about that. Real estate owner, builder and landlord, each pressing for all the profit there was in it, squeezed the inpouring workers into too tall buildings covering too much of their building lot, and into apartments of one or

two rooms, three at most, even in the smaller towns. And families were large in those days.

Germany began to awake to the bad effects of this type of housing in the late eighties. The German Association for Housing Reform has waged its campaign for more space within and without workers' homes upwards of 30 years. A great building campaign was carried out by Cooperative Housing Societies and by municipal housing bureaus in the decade before the war. Its effects were beginning to show in lower death and sickness rates. Precisely as in other countries, the war halted these efforts, halted all new housing construction, checked the amount of repairs normally undertaken, and at its close, increased prices made private building difficult. More than other countries, Germany suffered from intolerably high interest rates on mortgage money after the war and from the financial dislocations connected with the currency inflation of 1923. Another complication was provided by thousands of German families who moved into Germany from Poland and other territories which changed sovereignty at the close of the war, for whom some sort of shelter had to be provided all at once. Public authorities, Cooperative Housing Societies and the house rent tax came to the rescue.

The Report under review will help to keep them at their task.

EDITH ELMER WOOD

Cape May Court House, N. J.

## LINES ON A RECENT ISSUE OF "HOUSING"

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Now comes the latest *Housing* out  
More fitly called "Utopia"  
As full of splendid benefits  
As any cornucopia.

Desiderata by the page  
(And listed repetitiously)  
Tell you and me just what we need  
To live at home deliciously.

We must have air—we must have light,  
And every modern do-dad  
But one balm's lacking on the list  
And that to me 's just too bad!

The bath room surely should provide  
Some lotion that allays  
The ache and pain attendant on  
Your ultra *violent*\* rays?

—C. H. H.

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\* *We rejoice that we failed to catch a printer's error in our last issue, as otherwise our readers would not have had these amusing verses of Mr. Holmes.—Editor.*



## MORE LIGHT ON LIGHT

How amateurish and unscientific the efforts of American housing reformers and city planners are in dealing with the important question of light and its relation to buildings, is borne in upon one anew whenever the methods that have been employed for centuries by our cousins across the sea in England are considered.

This view is very greatly reenforced upon looking into a recent book on this subject, published in England, dealing with easements of light\* and modern methods of computing compensation, written by John Swarbrick, one of England's leading experts in this field. This book is necessarily written for the technician who has to deal with this important question in England—the expert who is called upon to testify as to the amount of diminution in light in a particular building caused by the erection of some adjacent building—and by the members of the Bar who have to handle this kind of litigation, which has become a very important branch of jurisprudence in that country.

Mr. Swarbrick's book brings together a number of articles written in serial form, published in *The Architects' Journal* during 1926. The book does a great deal more than this, however. In the words of G. H. B. Henrick, K. C., LL. D., who has written an introduction to it,

It explains and demonstrates an exact scientific method of determining definitely the extent of the deprivation of light which will result from the erection of a contemplated building, or the extent of the injury by infringement of light sustained in the case of a building already erected.

The book opens with an explanatory and historical review of the subject of Ancient Lights, or easements of light, as developed through several centuries in England. It discusses in detail the methods that have been evolved through the years—and more particularly in quite recent years—of presenting with scientific accuracy the amount of damage done to a building by the deprivation of its light through the erection of a neighboring building.

Other chapters of the book deal with such subjects as the following:

Some Modern Photometric Instruments; Daylight Ratios and Diffusely Reflected Light; Determination of Conditions not in Existence—Sky Projections and Calculating Diagrams; Daylight Plans; The Assessment of Compensation for Infringement and other matters; Modern Methods of Measuring Illumination.

The book contains 145 illustrations, and in the form of appendices, a number of important scientific Papers dealing with various aspects of the subject.

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\* Easements of Light—Modern Methods of Computing Compensation, by John Swarbrick. B. T. Batsford, Ltd. 94 High Holborn. London. 204 pp. Price 21s. net.

How important a question this has become to the law in England, will be gathered from the fact that one of these appendices is a "List of *Principal Cases Regarding Easements and Especially Easements of Light*" and includes over 500 cases decided by the English courts.

Much space is given in this volume, and properly so, to a description of the new scientific instruments that have been invented as a means of presenting accurately and effectively in court an accurate scientific statement as to the amount of light that has been diminished by the erection of an adjacent building and, consequently, the amount of damage suffered by the earlier building.

How great the development in this scientific method of demonstration has been is indicated in Mr. Kenrick's introduction.

He says:

Until recently the only mode of proof available was the evidence of witnesses, expert and otherwise, supplemented by plans and sometimes models of the affected and offending buildings. The opinions, impressions and conclusions of the witnesses on the two sides, though bona fide, might be and not infrequently were conflicting, if not diametrically opposed to each other. The plans and models were often indeterminate, inconclusive and inexact as to the actual extent of the injury, if not in fact, misleading. In these circumstances a more exact method of proof was clearly required, and in substitution for or supplement of the former somewhat vague and indefinite evidence, a system of definite scientific proof by means of geometrical charts or projections has been elaborated.

The methods that have been evolved by Mr. Swarbrick and others are set forth with great particularity in this book. One of these, not to be found there, however, is a new "Daylight Factor Theodolite", devised by Mr. Swarbrick, and recently put upon the market in England. This is an improvement on an earlier device known as the Thorner Daylight Factor Meter, and enables daylight factors at various points of an interior to be determined photographically in connection with easement of light cases. It is stated that by means of this instrument it is possible in many cases to reduce the cost of preparing daylight plans by more than 50%, and to ensure a rapidity of execution that has not hitherto been attempted.

When one looks around American cities, and sees the unbridled individualism with which owners of private property are permitted to erect buildings practically to any height—regardless of the effect upon neighboring property or the damage that results to neighboring buildings—it seems a far cry to the system of control that obtains in England. One, indeed, has to be optimistic to believe that the time will ever come in the United States when such consideration for the rights of others and the welfare of the community will be had.

In this mechanistic age, however, we Americans particularly pride ourselves upon the scientific basis for what we do, and there is a pos-

sibility, therefore, that before long, even in the United States these questions of light will be determined upon a more scientific basis than they are at present. When that time comes, Mr. Swarbrick's book will prove of value to city planners and to housing reformers in this country.

In the mean time, in view of the lessened activity in this field because of the financial depression, we commend to city planners generally, and to the more limited band of housing reformers the desirability of having a copy of this important volume in their libraries and devoting their leisure moments to a study of its less technical aspects.

It is not at all beyond the range of possibilities that laws similar to the English Law of Ancient Lights may come into vogue in the United States some day.

### SIMULATED SUNLIGHT\*

Whether we are to have windowless homes with artificial light and conditioned air remains to be seen. Such forms of habitations are still in the experimental stage. Whether we shall ever come to them, ever find in our homes satisfactory substitutes for God's sunlight and fresh air remains to be seen.

That we are, however, not merely approaching but rapidly emerging into a period where greater and greater dependence is had upon artificial light of various kinds, not only in the places where we work but in the places where we live, cannot be gainsaid.

How far the beneficial effects of sunlight—particularly the benefits that come from the ultra-violet and infrared rays—can be achieved by artificial substitutes presents a very important question. Mr. Luckiesh, who is one of the country's leading authorities on this subject, and has written much on various aspects of light during the past 15 years, attempts in this book to present to a lay audience—as well as to the scientific world—the possibilities that are to be found in such substitutes.

In the opening chapter of this important volume Mr. Luckiesh says:

For many years it has been obvious to those who direct their resources upon the future of artificial light and lighting that a new era of simulated sunlight was approaching. Before the recent furore of selling cure-all devices, enough was known of the curative and health value of sunlight to indicate to the developers of artificial lighting that eventually lighting would have a dual purpose—for health as well as for seeing. Certainly it falls to the lot of those who have chosen to illuminate the artificial world—to provide this independence from the natural world—to create a quality of light which possesses as much of the value of sunlight as possible.

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\* *Artificial Sunlight*. By M. Luckiesh. D. Van Nostrand Co., 250 Fourth Avenue, N. Y. C. 248 pp. Price \$3.75.



That a new field for fruitful investigation has been opened up by the greater use of artificial light and the application to it of the more recent discoveries in the value of the ultra-violet and infrared rays is evident.

Mr. Luckiesh's book should prove of great importance to all persons who have occasion to determine the amount of natural daylight that is necessary for our future cities. We heartily commend it—technical though it is in many of its aspects—to city planners and housing practitioners.

## A SYMPOSIUM ON ZONING

What may be appropriately referred to as a Pacific Coast symposium on Zoning—diluted with a sprinkling of discussions by persons from other parts of the United States—is published as a special issue of "The Annals" of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, in a book of 227 pages, published as Part Two of the regular May issue of that journal.

While this publication adds little to the state of knowledge of the subject or to its scientific advancement, it should undoubtedly aid in stimulating interest in zoning in the Western part of this country. Students of zoning who wish to obtain this publication can obtain copies from "The Annals", 3622 Locust Street, Philadelphia, price \$1.

## ANTIQUATED BUILDING CODES

In view of the statements made by the Division of Building and Housing of the U. S. Department of Commerce in a recent Report\*—that 88 cities in the country still have building codes that are 20 years old or more; that 126 other cities have codes from 15 to 20 years old; 162 cities have codes from 10 to 15 years; and the codes in 342 other cities are from 5 to 10 years old—it would seem that the publication by the National Board of Fire Underwriters of its completely revised Standard Building Code,\*\* was most timely.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago this organization published its first "Recommended Building Code". Most of the building codes of the country have been very materially influenced by the editions of that building code that have been put forth from time to time by this organization. The latest version, the 5th edition, has recently been published. Like its predecessors it is a complete code, seeking to serve as a basis

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\* *Building Code and Plumbing Code Tabulation. Division of Building and Housing, U. S. Department of Commerce, July 9, 1931. Multigraphed, 42 pp.*

\*\* *Copies of this 286 page book bound in cloth may be obtained from the National Board of Fire Underwriters, 85 John Street, N. Y. C.*

or model for every community in the United States that is without an adequate building code and which does not know how to go about getting one and wants some basis on which to proceed.

There is no thought, of course, on the part of the promoters of this code that it will be blindly copied by any community. They expect each community to modify it to suit their local needs, but very wisely point out that it should only be modified as their local conditions make it necessary.

## THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

### THE ENGLISH HOUSING ACTS

That there is no royal road to housing is made evident by three books that have recently been published dealing with the English Housing Law.

The enthusiast who takes up housing for the first time thinks it is a comparatively simple matter and that all that needs to be done is to get some law passed that will do away with the slums and bring about the establishment of changed conditions. He soon learns, however, it is not thus to be accomplished, that a long and wearisome apprenticeship must be served in the ranks before one is fit to lead the army in the attack against these entrenched evils. Getting a new housing law sounds quite simple. Drafting an act to clear the slums is the obvious thing to do, but if one wants to realize just what is involved in either of these achievements we commend to his study these three valuable and important books.\*

Every student of housing in the United States and every member of a Housing Board or organization active in the cause of better housing in this country should have these standard references in his library.

The first of these, "The Housing Acts" by Henderson & Maddock, is in reality a treatise on the present English Housing Law, the Act of 1930, with its full text annotated and explained and the complete text of the unrepealed sections of the earlier Acts. The book contains a brief foreword by the former Minister of Health of the Labor Government, Arthur Greenwood.

In addition, the book contains a Table of Cases that have arisen under the various Housing Acts since the earliest act; a table of the

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\* *The Housing Acts 1925 and 1930.* Henderson and Maddock. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 1930. London. 514 pp. Price 27s 6d.

*The Complete Law of Housing.* H. A. Hill. Butterworth and Co. Bell Yard, Temple Bar. London. 394 pp. Price 25s net.

*London Building Act—1930.* By Theodore John Sophian. Sweet and Maxwell, Ltd. 2 and 3 Chancery Lane, W. C. 2, London. 204 pp. Price 21s, net.

various statutes; a summary of the 1930 Law; a practical survey of this statute by Ewart G. Culpin; various circulars, statutory rules, orders, forms and model byelaws issued by the various government departments; and a series of regulations, forms of orders and notices issued under the 1930 Act, including the model Byelaws of that Act. It also contains a very complete index.

We should think that everyone operating under the Housing Law in England would find it essential to have this important publication at his elbow. No lawyer, no surveyor and no housing authority in that country, we imagine, can really function without it.

The second book, "The Complete Law of Housing" by H. A. Hill, is a publication along very similar lines, though it differs in treatment. This also contains the text of the new Housing Act of 1930, as well as of the previous Act, the Act of 1925—with all the unrepealed sections of the housing laws previously enacted, together with an introduction, explanatory notes, and an appendix, in which will be found the material statutory rules and orders, in addition to the customary tables of statutes and tables of cases.

The introduction will have especial interest for American housing reformers. It consists of 5 chapters and sketches the earlier history of housing legislation, gives a summary of the main provisions of the various housing acts, contains a critique of the 1930 Act, an analysis of the slum problem, and a note on Public Utility Societies especially contributed by A. T. Pike, Secretary of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. The book is very fully annotated and like the companion volume just reviewed is an invaluable compendium for all persons having occasion to practice under the housing laws in England.

Every member of the bar, every surveyor, every important official or housing authority will find this publication invaluable in his daily work dealing with housing. It should be in the library of every important housing organization in every English-speaking country.

The third book deals not with the 1930 Housing Law but is a treatise on the London Building Act, also enacted in 1930, and representing a consolidation of existing statutes, which for a long time have cried aloud for revision. This important law, the London Building Act, should have especial interest for housing reformers and city planners in the United States, as well as in England, for it lays down standards for the control of open spaces and the height of buildings that it would well pay American practitioners to follow.

The book consists of an introduction in which the building laws of London are traced back to shortly after the great fire in 1666—the first



Building Act having been passed the following year. Since that time there have been a succession of acts.

The book also contains a discussion of the London Building Act of 1930 fully annotated, and—in the form of a series of appendices—regulations and bye-laws and supplementary acts dealing with cognate subjects such as regulations governing Boards of Appeals, dwelling houses on low-lying land, reinforced concrete, fire-resistive materials, factory and workshop acts, the formation of new streets &c &c.

Truly a publication which American practitioners should have in their libraries.

## THE HOUSING OF NEGROES IN WASHINGTON

*“Bad housing conditions among any group are a menace to the whole community. Disease germs, whether in the field of physical, moral or social health, know no social barriers.”*

The results of a careful and thorough two-year investigation of the living conditions of the Negroes in the capital city of the United States, are set forth in this book.\*

This study, made under the auspices of the International Committee of the Washington Federation of Churches, by William Henry Jones, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology in Howard University, is the best thing that has thus far been done in this field. The example should be emulated.

In northwest and southwest Washington and in Georgetown a house-to-house canvass was conducted covering practically every street in which persons of color live. Data were reported from 6,841 homes, although at least 1,000 more were visited. But the final conclusions are based on a study in most instances of from 3,500 to 5,500 schedules covering the various sections of the city. This house-to-house canvass was importantly supplemented by Professor Jones' personal observations and innumerable conferences.

For more than 60 years the distinctive feature of the housing problem in Washington has been the inhabited alleys. In these probably 100,000 people have lived. From 1872 to 1890 the total alley population is estimated to have been 25,000; in 1897 it was 19,000, of whom 14,250 were Negroes. The total alley population dropped in 1913 to 11,326, of whom over 10,000 were Negroes. It rose again in 1925 according to police census to over 13,000—all but 331 of whom were Negroes. In 1927 the total alley population was but 9,000.

Professor Jones shows in great detail the bad effects of alley life both upon white and colored people. Thus in the matter of mortality

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\* *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D. C.*, by William Henry Jones. 191 pp. Price \$2.15 net. Howard University Press, Washington, D. C. 1930.

from tuberculosis the white population show a rate of 186.5 per 100,000 in the alleys, as contrasted with 121.2 in the streets; whereas, the Negro death rate in the alleys was 621.3, per 100,000, as contrasted with 433.7 in the streets. In matters of health, crime, and general efficiency, the devastating effects of the alley environment are very convincingly set forth.

On the basis of this study the recommendation is made to the Congress of the United States to enact such legislation as will eliminate the inhabited alleys from the Nation's capital, turning the larger ones into minor streets and parking places and demolishing the houses in the smaller ones. Professor Jones is wise in disagreeing with the supervisor of playgrounds in the District of Columbia and urging that the alleys be *not* turned into playgrounds, because playgrounds should always be open to public view. Curiously enough, it was the deep blocks that the French engineer L'Enfant provided for the District of Columbia that made possible the utilization of the block interiors for residential purposes. The tragic delay in clearing up the alleys has undoubtedly been due to the fact that the investment yielded enormous returns to a few investors.

The study urges a modernized health department for the District of Columbia with a Housing Bureau.

It discusses in great detail how the lack of housing facilities in the sections occupied by Negroes at any particular time leads to the so-called "invasion" of sections hitherto occupied entirely by whites. The motive is not at all to acquire white neighbors but simply to secure better housing facilities.

The whites affected resent such invasions bitterly. Public opinion frowns upon their remaining in neighborhoods where Negroes live. So the whites are constrained to sell their homes for what they can get and move elsewhere. Professor Jones points out, however, that financially the loss is borne—not as is so often alleged by the whites who sell to Negroes—but by the Negro owners, when banks, trust companies, and insurance companies mark down values because of the restricted market and the present lack of confidence in Negro realty.

He refers to the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Curtis case as "the most damaging ruling against the freedom of Negro expansion in American cities that has ever been announced"—and his language is not extravagant.\* The court refused to review a decision of the lower courts sustaining a covenant among property owners "that no part of the land . . . shall ever be used or occupied or sold, conveyed, leased, rented, or given to Negroes or persons of

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\* *Mrs. Bruce's and Dr. Jones' opinion, not ours—Editor.*

the Negro race or blood." The study shows convincingly that the effect of these covenants is most unfortunate financially to the owners and their successors, because of the unpredictable shifts in residence of the racial groups of the city.

At the time of the Curtis case, six or seven houses in the neighborhood in which the house at issue was located, were occupied by persons of color. But, a tidal movement had set in. Despite the covenant and the court decision, the very house upon which the litigation focussed is now occupied by colored people. Indeed, today, the neighborhood is 100% colored. Mrs. Partington hasn't yet learned to sweep back a tidal population movement with the broom of litigation.

Backward social vision still runs with "covenants running with the land" and *Stare Decisis* still holds the whip hand over much of our judicial legislation.

While rents in the District of Columbia outside of the inhabited alleys are not especially high for Negroes, they are compelled to pay exorbitant prices when they purchase homes. Nevertheless, 46.5% of the 5,450 homes studied were owned or being purchased by the Negro occupants, a very creditable showing.

Since 1920, apartment houses for Negroes have become more and more important. Nevertheless, the largest number of apartments in any one of these houses Professor Jones reports to have been only 40. Cooperative apartments have been started in a small way and—though in the hands of commercial realtors—appear to have proved fairly successful.

The importance of this study is that it is based upon an actual house-to-house canvass of a large number of Negro homes. The study is factual, no attempt whatever being made to develop propaganda.

The book would have been improved by more and very much better photographs of the actual houses of the District of Columbia Negro community; by as complete tabular statistical statements as possible of the white and Negro population of Washington from the year 1800 onward, and of the white and Negro alley population since the earliest records.

Moreover, while a 5-type classification of houses is an improvement upon the Chicago Commission classification, it could with a little ingenuity be rendered much more clear, definite and serviceable for the purposes of such a study. Since a volume of this kind is intended for wide circulation among laymen, the use of such terms as "ecology", "acculturation", and even "*mores*" seems unfortunate.

Racial attitudes being what they are today, a study of this kind can, of course, best be made by a trained Negro scholar like William



Henry Jones. His selection by the Interracial Committee may have been an act of faith, but their faith has been fully justified by his works. Chairman Anson Phelps Stokes of the Committee and his associates have rendered an important public service in making this study possible.

CLARA BURRILL BRUCE  
New York City

## RECENT TRENDS IN AMERICAN HOUSING\*

In this new book Mrs. Wood surveys the last 14 years of American housing experience. To American students this latest contribution will be of especial significance in its reflection of the shifting emphasis of attack on the housing problem since the war.

Twelve years ago Mrs. Wood published a historical summary of American and European housing experience under the title "The Problem of the Unskilled Wage Earner—America's Next Problem". In reviewing that period, major attention was given, of necessity, to the progress of restrictive housing legislation. Up to that time there was but a meager record of what Mrs. Wood termed "constructive housing reform in the building of desirable houses for working people".

In her latest book Mrs. Wood states her position in the first paragraph

The crux of the housing problem is economic. Under the ordinary laws of supply and demand it is insoluble. In our modern industrial civilization the distribution of income is such that a substantial portion of the population cannot pay a commercial rent, much less a commercial purchase price, for a home fulfilling the minimum health and decency requirements. This is not a local or transitory phenomenon. It is universal and permanent—to the extent, at least, that our economic system is universal and permanent. The sooner we in the United States recognize these facts, as most thinking people in the rest of the civilized world have already done, the sooner we shall find a remedy. For of course there *is* one—if we choose to pay the price for it.

After reviewing the housing situation in 1917, Mrs. Wood evaluates America's adventure into governmental housing during the war, traces the growth of the post-war housing shortage in the larger cities, and summarizes the results of price fixing by rent restriction, of the efforts to produce adequate housing by tax exemption without restriction, and of the sporadic attempts to enforce decent housing conditions by tenement house laws and housing codes.

The author traces the development of city and regional planning and of zoning and points to the application of planning principles in the development of Mariemont, Radburn and other Garden communities. Beginning with the early efforts of limited-dividend corporations to provide decent housing for wage-earners' families in various cities of the United States, Mrs. Wood presents the results of the latest develop-

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\* *Recent trends in American Housing*, by Edith Elmer Wood, Ph.D., The Macmillan Company, 300 pp., Price \$3. 1931.

ments of the City and Suburban Homes Corporation, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, the City Housing Corporation, and of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in New York City, and of the Rosenwald Foundation and the Marshall Field Estate in Chicago.

Scanning the post-war years, Mrs. Wood finds little to be encouraged about. She says that "the net result of accomplishment is hardly one to justify a high degree of optimism"; that "so far as two-thirds of the population are concerned we have lost ground. If Europe in the war period was a generation ahead of us in her attitude towards the housing problem, the distance is greater now. However, some encouragement is derived from the "two outstanding developments in American housing of the past decade", namely the progress which has been made under the California Veterans' Farm and Home Purchase Act, under which \$50,000,000 has been expended by the State since 1921 in financing the purchase of farms and homes by families earning not more than \$1,800 per annum, and in the work of the New York State Board of Housing under the terms of the State Housing Law enacted in 1926, which has resulted in the expenditure of more than \$10,000,000 of private capital in the construction of model multi-family dwellings for wage-earners at minimum rents fixed by statute.

The author devotes one chapter to the difficulties of slum clearance in American cities, citing in detail the obstacles to an effective clearance programme encountered in New York City and in Washington, and presents a strong economic defense for a 10-year nation-wide programme for rebuilding slum districts. Mrs. Wood marshals many facts to prove that "it is much more economically sound as a means of ending unemployment than the accepted multiplying of public expenditures for roads and post office buildings, which we could perfectly well do without for a while". "It is, in fact," she says, "the most statesmanlike proposal yet made for turning hard times into good ones."

It is unfortunate that Mrs. Wood does not evoke from her wide knowledge of past experience any concrete suggestions for overcoming the many legal and administrative obstacles to the practical realization of this proposal. It is to be hoped that she will soon turn her attention to elucidating the procedure which much be followed if a constructive housing programme is to assume greater proportions than has been witnessed in the past. Meanwhile students of the housing problem should be thankful to Mrs. Wood for her very useful and comprehensive summary of recent American experience.

GEORGE GOVE  
New York City



## THE SCIENCE OF CITY PLANNING

AUG 29 1951

## TWO RECENT STUDIES \*

LIBRARY

City Planning is both a science and an art. It was natural that while this movement was in its formative stages in the United States emphasis should have been laid upon the practice of the art of city planning rather than on the discovery and enunciation of the principles of the science of city planning.

We are glad to say that that period is rapidly passing and that the time has come when the principles of the science of city planning may be enunciated and adhered to.

Two recent studies made by the Graduate School of City Planning of Harvard University, published about a year ago, present the findings of city planning experts in the field of research into some of the principles of city planning and some of its scientific aspects.

One of these dealt with that question, vitally important to American cities, the Control of the Height and Bulk of Buildings. The other dealt with the means by which the amenities of neighborhoods of small homes may be preserved, and how Residential Neighborhoods may be Developed as Self-contained Neighborhood Units, preserving all of the best features of residential districts and yet at the same time be in harmony with the fundamental principles of city planning and with the practical development of the community of which they are a part.

In a preface to this series of studies Professor Henry V. Hubbard, the well-known city planner and Chairman of the Harvard University School of City Planning, with his wife Theodora Kimball Hubbard, as Editor of Research, sets forth the purposes that the Graduate School of City Planning had in view when undertaking these studies. As expressed by them, those objectives were as follows:

The University hopes to render substantial service to the communities of this country by thus laying before the public and those concerned in civic development—city officials, engineers, architects, landscape architects, planning consultants, realtors, builders, lawyers, members of chambers of commerce—freshly gathered and analyzed information, compressed into monographs appearing shortly after each investigation is brought to a conclusion. While research alone can never

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\* *Building Height, Bulk and Form: How Zoning Can Be Used as a Protection Against Uneconomic Types of Buildings on High-Cost Land*, by George B. Ford, assisted by A. B. Randall and Leonard Cox. Vol. II, *Harvard City Planning Studies*. 181 pp. Price \$3.50. University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

\* *Neighborhoods of Small Homes: Economic Density of Low-Cost Housing in America and England*, by Robert Whitten and Thomas Adams. Vol. III, *Harvard City Planning Studies*. 200 pp. Price \$3.50. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.



solve the complicated problems of civic growth, it can contribute constructively if the facts selected are vital and representative, and presented in a form facilitating actual application in the promotion of wholesome trends of community life.

The study with regard to the Control of Building Height and Bulk was made by the late George B. Ford, aided by A. B. Randall, an engineer and economist who has specialized on the economics of the building industry, and Leonard Cox, a New York architect who has been much interested in housing. It embodies the results of research undertaken primarily with a view to determining the optimum size and shape of buildings on high-priced land under conditions present or reasonably to be hoped for, and to suggesting in what way zoning may be used to bring about desirable conditions.

It was the hope of those responsible for this study that it would furnish solid and specific help to those dealing in any responsible capacity with commercial or apartment buildings on high-priced land, as well as to legislative bodies dealing with the regulation of the bulk and lot coverage of such buildings. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that the Report concerns itself solely with areas in which land is already high-priced land.

The limitations of such research are clearly recognized by the editors who point out that in this and in the subsequent Report of Mr. Whitten and Mr. Adams it is not the endeavor of the Harvard School of City Planning to attempt the impossible in comprehensiveness, but to make available on each subject studied some definite, timely and valuable information and perhaps to stimulate others to get more precise information, of which the preliminary exploration has shown the possibility, the need and, perhaps, the financial value.

The book in question consists of 4 chapters entitled Recent Conditions and Needs; Physical Factors Influencing Building Design; Methods of Determining Optimum Building Mass, and Recommendations, and in addition contains 11 Appendices on the following aspects of the problem:

Traffic and Building Use; Safety and Egress; Dust, Gas, and Noise; Light and Sunlight; The Most Profitable Building on Varying Land Values; Rentals Increase with Height and Exposure; Office Building Financing and Building Costs; Bulk and Form of Buildings; Obsolescence and Vacancies; Apartment House Study; Discussion of the Apartment House Graphs.

The book is illustrated with several half-tone plates and numerous tables and graphs. It has a full index.



## NEIGHBORHOOD UNITS

The second study dealt with the question of the establishment of Neighborhoods of Small Homes with regard to the recognized and elementary principles of town planning. The purposes are thus stated by the Editors, Professor and Mrs. Hubbard:

Here is presented a study to determine how sparsely we may spread population and still meet the cost of complete city improvements and adequate housing. What effects have lot size, open space, and block and street layout on the cost of the home? How should the economic and social considerations involved be recognized in zoning and the control of land subdivision? Toward answering these questions, Mr. Whitten and Professor Adams, respectively for the United States and England, have assembled their facts and directed their conclusions; which must inevitably be of vital interest to realtors and home owners, as well as to city officials and housing experts.

The Editors add that the Harvard School of City Planning recognizes that these studies can scarcely do more than open the door to further research along the same lines, so great is the need, as they put it, for more logical bases for the residential growth of our cities and towns and so wide the opportunity for thoughtful study.

In making this statement the Editors announce with satisfaction that Thomas Adams has undertaken additional studies relating to home building on low-cost land, which will be published as a future volume of the series.

The book is really two separate studies—though closely related. One deals with the working out and establishment for American conditions in normal communities of what may be termed an economic self-contained Neighborhood Unit. The other part of the book deals with what has been done in England in relation to the economic density of low-cost housing and stresses the English housing laws and the results achieved under those various statutes.

Mr. Whitten's study is a development from an earlier study made by him in 1927 in association with Clarence A. Perry of the Regional Plan of New York and on behalf jointly of that organization and Syracuse University\*.

When this earlier study of Mr. Whitten's appeared we characterized it as "a notable contribution to the science of city planning". What we said then applies equally to the more elaborate study now presented to the public.

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\* See "*Housing*", Vol. 17, December, 1928, pp. 312-316.

Mr. Whitten's Report is divided into 9 chapters which bear the following titles:

Introduction; The Existing Economic Demand for Small Houses and Low-Rent Apartments; The Present Situation as to the Building of Low-Cost Houses; Cost of Acreage When Ripe for Building Development; Present Practice as to Lot Size Improvement Cost and Improved-Lot Cost; Present Subdivision Practice and Effect of Density on Acreage Values and on Lot Values; Requirements for Light, Air and Open Space; Planning as Affecting Improvement Costs and Community Values; Summary and Recommendations.

Mr. Adams' study, dealing with the Economic Density of Low-cost Housing in England is divided into 7 chapters bearing the following titles:

Introduction; Summary of Housing Legislation and Conditions in England; Elements in Housing Costs and Distinction Between Types of Houses; Typical Housing Schemes in London; Studies of Selected Areas; Costs of Dwellings and Local Improvements; The General Problem of Planning Residential Neighborhoods and Controlling Building Densities.

The book contains a number of appendices in the form of statistical tables, maps and explanatory data to both parts of the Report and is very fully illustrated with numerous half-tone plates, tables and diagrams and has a good index.

It is a striking tribute to the value of this study made public only in the Summer of 1931 that it should have been the basis of so much of the discussion had at the vast Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership held at Washington at the call of President Hoover last December. Not only did this scheme of scientifically organized neighborhoods underlie most of the Reports of the Conference, but it formed a very large element of the discussions that were had upon that occasion, showing that even in the short time that Mr. Whitten's study had been made public, it had already had a far-reaching effect and influence upon the minds of city planning practitioners.

Every housing and city planning practitioner in the United States should have these books in his working library and should not only read them but should study them. Every housing department of the city government, every city planning board, every zoning board should be familiar with their contents.